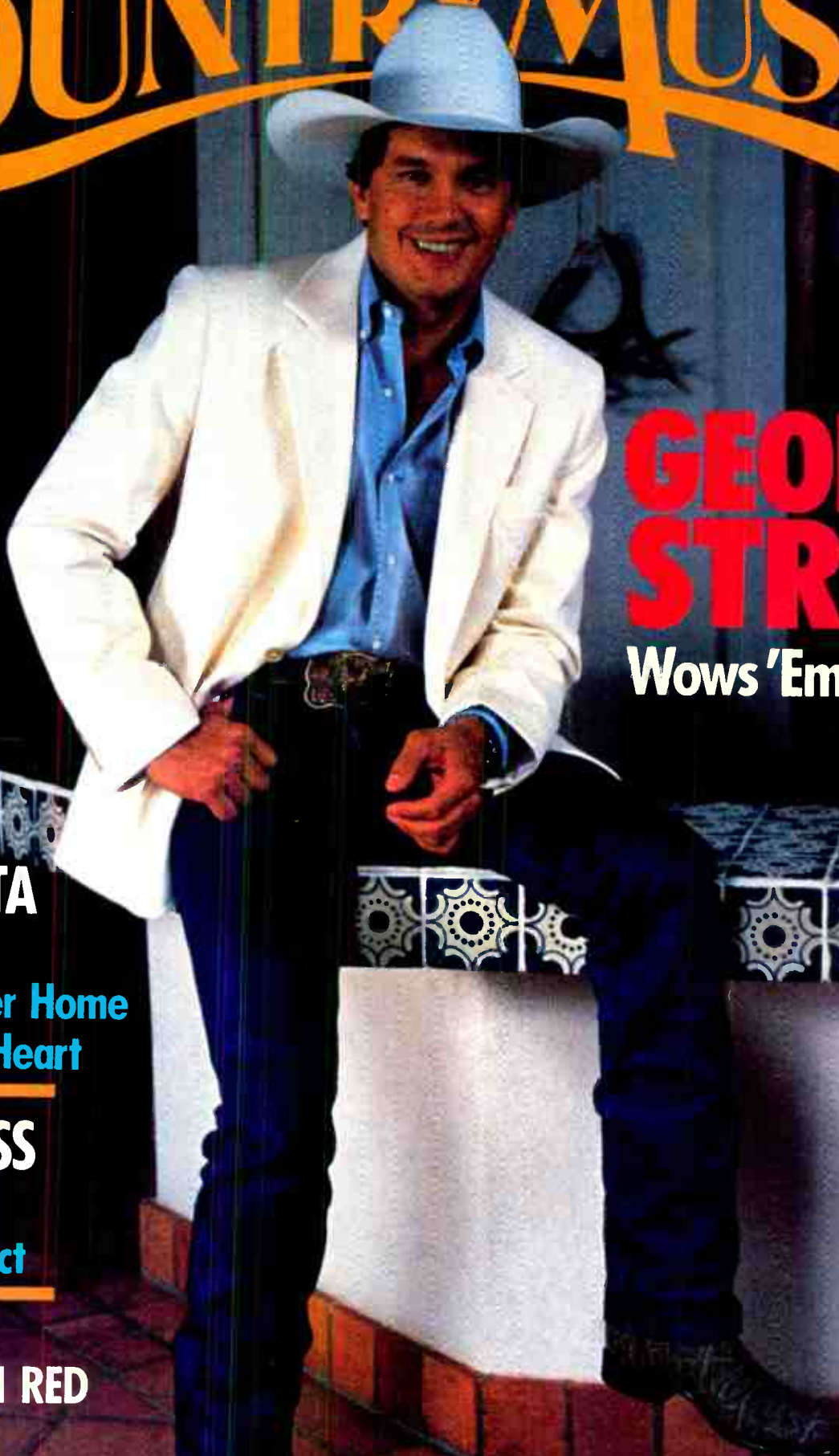


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COUNTRY MUSIC™



2 Letters

Readers support Dwight Yoakam's style and Ricky Skaggs' songs, long lost artists turn up, Johnny Cash is an angel, and Cash and Tom T. Hall comment on our 15th Anniversary. Record reviewers get sent back to the minors.

19 People

Stars travel to faraway places and put their names in cement close to home. Willie and Connie Nelson split, Dolly plans for her future, Travis and Strait head up the Marlboro Country Tour, Doc Watson honors his son and more. Plus an Update on Connie Smith.

by Hazel Smith

30 Loretta Lynn: The Importance of Being Loretta

The coal miner's daughter opens her home to the media and her fans. With a new album out and another on the way, we get a chance to see two sides of Loretta.

by Bob Allen

39 Restless Heart: Growing Pains

Restless Heart began as five guys showcasing the talents of one. Now they're a successful band blending the talents of five. Performing on the road has sharpened their style.

by Bob Allen

42 George Strait and The Ace In the Hole Band Pick Up the Pieces Where Bob Wills Left Off

George Strait is having fun playing hot Texas music and wowing the women. Fame feels good though he regrets its intrusions. He's just plain folks offstage.

by Bob Allen

53 Record Reviews

The Forester Sisters are sincere, Hank Jr. is still wild and Johnny Gimble is still fiddlin' around. Plus new releases from Holly Dunn, Keith Whitley and newcomer Becky Hobbs.

70 Buried Treasures

You can't find early releases by Wynn Stewart, The Osborne Brothers, Hank Snow, Porter Wagoner and others? Well, look no further. Rich Kienzle has found them.

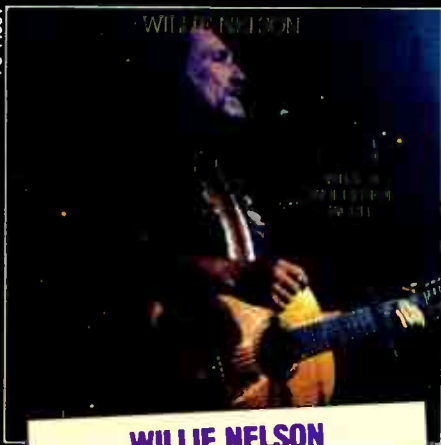
by Rick Kienzle

72 20 Questions with Shotgun Red

Shotgun Red speaks for himself, with an assist from Bane.

by Michael Bane

FC 44331

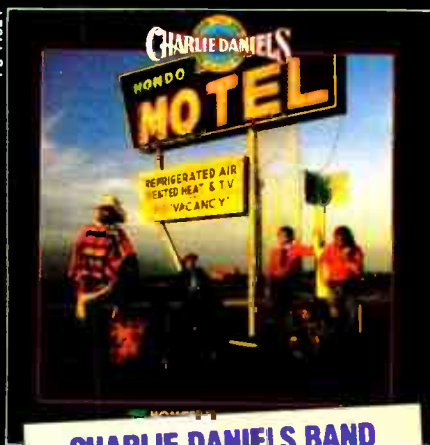


WILLIE NELSON

"WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD"

For the 10th anniversary of his classic "Stardust" album Willie presents something Wonderful! Including his new duet with Julio Iglesias, "Spanish Eyes".

FC 44324

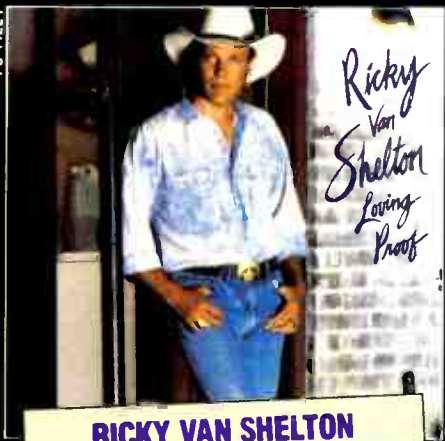


CHARLIE DANIELS BAND

"HOMESICK HEROES"

Charlie Daniels comes home to the country, blues & rock that originally turned America on to his great band! Including the single that puts it all together, "Boogie Woogie Fiddle Country Blues".

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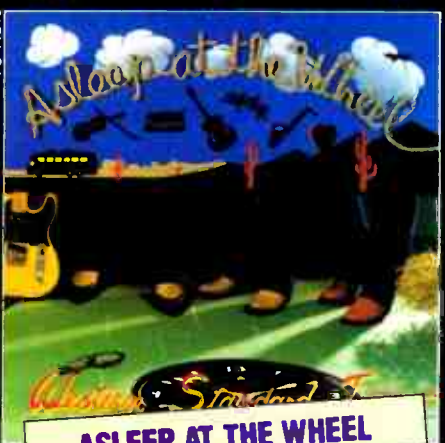


RICKY VAN SHELTON

"LOVING PROOF"

Here's the follow-up to the "Wild-Eyed Dream" that produced five hit singles, including three that went all the way to #1! It all begins again with "I'll Leave This World Loving You".

FC 44213

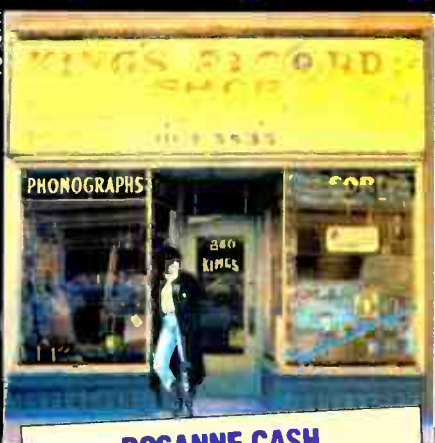


ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

"WESTERN STANDARD TIME"

The whole country's going on "Western Standard Time", the swingin'est album yet from these two-time Grammy winners. Including the runaway hit, "Walk On By".

FC 40777



ROSANNE CASH

"KING'S RECORD SHOP"

Here's where to go for the #1 hits "If You Change Your Mind", "Tennessee Flat Top Box", "The Way We Make A Broken Heart" and the unstoppable "Runaway Train".

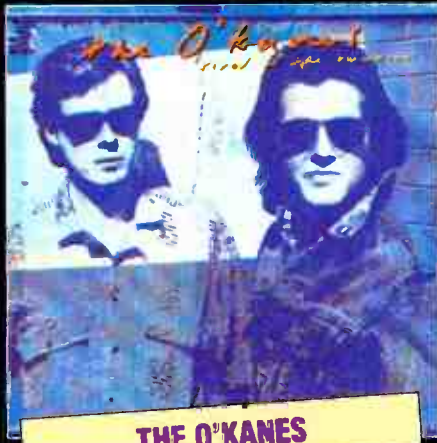
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COUNTRY'S STARS RECORDS, COMPACT

1986 CBS

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DISCS



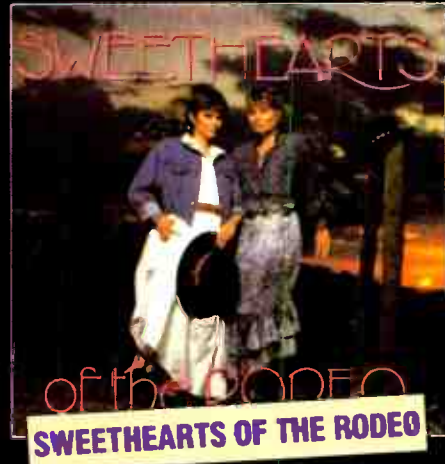
FC 44086

THE O'KANES

"TIRED OF THE RUNNIN'"

They've got one of the freshest sounds in country music, and they just won't let up! This second album already has two great hits...

"One True Love" and "Blue Love".

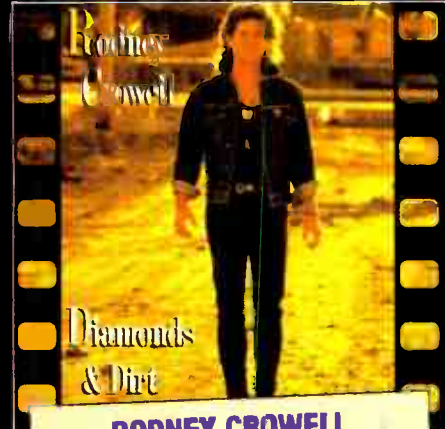


FC 40614

SWEETHEARTS OF THE RODEO

"ONE TIME, ONE NIGHT"

Everybody keeps coming back for more of the Sweethearts. Their new album is sure to "Satisfy You". Including the new hit, "Blue To The Bone".



FC 44076

RODNEY CROWELL

"DIAMONDS AND DIRT"

An album you can dig into! Including the #1 duet with Rosanne Cash, "It's Such A Small World", the smash "I Couldn't Leave You If I Tried" and Rodney's latest, "After All This Time".

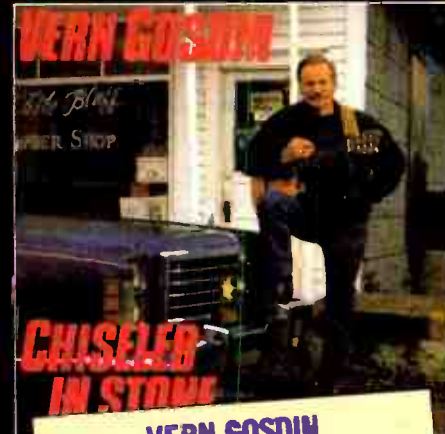


FC 40986

MERLE HAGGARD

"CHILL FACTOR"

How cool can you get? This is the album with all three of Merle's most recent hits: "Chill Factor", "We Never Touch At All", and the #1 "Twinkle, Twinkle Lucky Star".



FC 40902

VERN GOSDIN

"CHISELED IN STONE"

He's "The Voice" of success with his breakthrough hit "Do You Believe Me Now", his big #1 winner "Set 'Em Up Joe", and the title track, released by popular demand, "Chiseled In Stone".

Letters

Cash Likes Country Music

To Country Music Magazine:

Congratulations on 15 years.

You're still giving the fans and people like myself in-depth, informative and unique stories every month.

You're still first class, first rate, and a credit to our business.

Thanks for all the kind words.

Johnny Cash

Tom T. Does, Too

Years ago when *Country Music Magazine* first came out, that was before the big boom in country music, I remember how impressed I was. First of all I was impressed that it came out of New York where all the big time magazines came from. And then, of course, we were all pretty amazed that the writers could write, the photographers were pros, and the critics had actually listened to the music. It just made us all feel good that a group of serious, professional people were taking our music seriously.

A really great magazine never just reports the news. A truly great magazine makes news, becomes involved, urges change and welcomes growth in creativity. *Country Music Magazine* gets a share of the credit for the wide acceptance of its music.

I salute you on fifteen great years and look forward.

A friend,
Tom T. Hall



Flying the Wing with Dwight Yoakam

Being an aviation-addicted person, I went to the local airport to watch planes land and take off. Jets are my weakness, so when a beautiful Lear taxied up to Tyler Aero, I had to venture over for a closer look. My friends there were excited about the arrival of the guys on

the jet. Not being a C&W aficionado, I didn't have a clue who these guys were. My friends told me that the cute one with the baseball cap on was Dwight Yoakam. They said I should ask for an autograph even though I wasn't familiar with him. Still mesmerized by the plane, I walked over to him and asked. He obliged without hesitation.

Looking at the plane, I asked how the ride was. He said like a dream and then asked about my enthusiasm concerning aircraft. I told him I was hopefully soon going to a commercial flight school to earn my wings to fly charter and commercial carriers. He asked several questions, showing a genuine interest in my quest for the skies. He told me he was going for his private license, which peaked my interest because most people don't understand why people want to become pilots. His sensitivity and friendliness captivated me.

I have since read articles about him and purchased his tapes. Some articles were ruthless, but others like the one in the May/June issue of *Country Music* by Patrick Carr brought to light that Dwight Yoakam is a nice guy.

Listening to his music brought back long gone memories, and I've truly enjoyed the "change" from rock 'n' roll. Oh, yeah, Dwight, remember to always fly the wing, and also sincere wishes for a continuing rise with your "California Hillbilly" music career and, of course, your pilot's license... You are a great guy!

Nikki Anderson
Tyler, Texas

The Real Dwight Yoakam

When I read the first line of the story on Dwight Yoakam in your May/June issue, I nearly dropped my teeth. You painted a picture of an awful little twit that I just wanted to flip over my lap and spank.

Then you flipped him over to the other side and turned him into the sweetest little country boy I ever read about. Before the article was finished, I was thinking what must be inside this boy who sings like all the mamas in the world want their babies to sing.

Since the day I first heard Dwight sing I knew someone special had entered the country music field. Dwight sure may not know he's going to be

another Buck or Webb or Lefty or Willie, but I do.

May the good Lord watch over and keep him the good boy he is and the rest of the world look inside and see him for who he really is.

Billie Morris
Whitney, Texas



Vanessa Bowling caught up with that polite Dwight in D.C. recently.

Polite Dwight

I have just received my May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*. Your article on Dwight Yoakam was great. I've read a lot of articles about him but enjoyed this one the most. He is the main reason I started getting your magazine. With his trouble in Nashville, it's very hard to find him as a guest on many shows. I was so lucky to meet and talk to him last summer in Washington, D.C., at the Warner Theater. He honestly is one of the nicest, politest performers I've ever met. I belong to his fan club and have many enlarged pictures of him throughout my house.

I think Dwight is doing just what his dad advised him—be yourself, be Dwight. I have been to three of his concerts and they only get better each time. Hang in there, Dwight—you're what it's all about—country!

Vanessa Bowling
Chantilly, Virginia

Dwight Address...Please!

I enjoyed the article on Dwight Yoakam in the May/June issue. I, too, was brought up listening to the "old" country with my daddy.

Dwight has lots of fans here on the

The Only Handcrafted

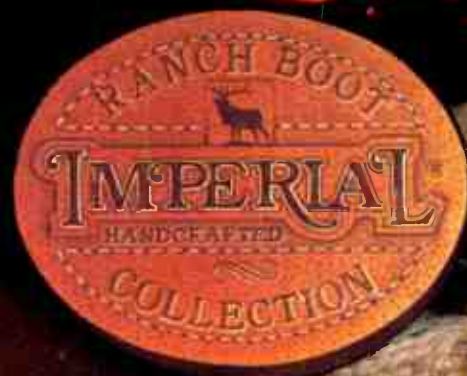
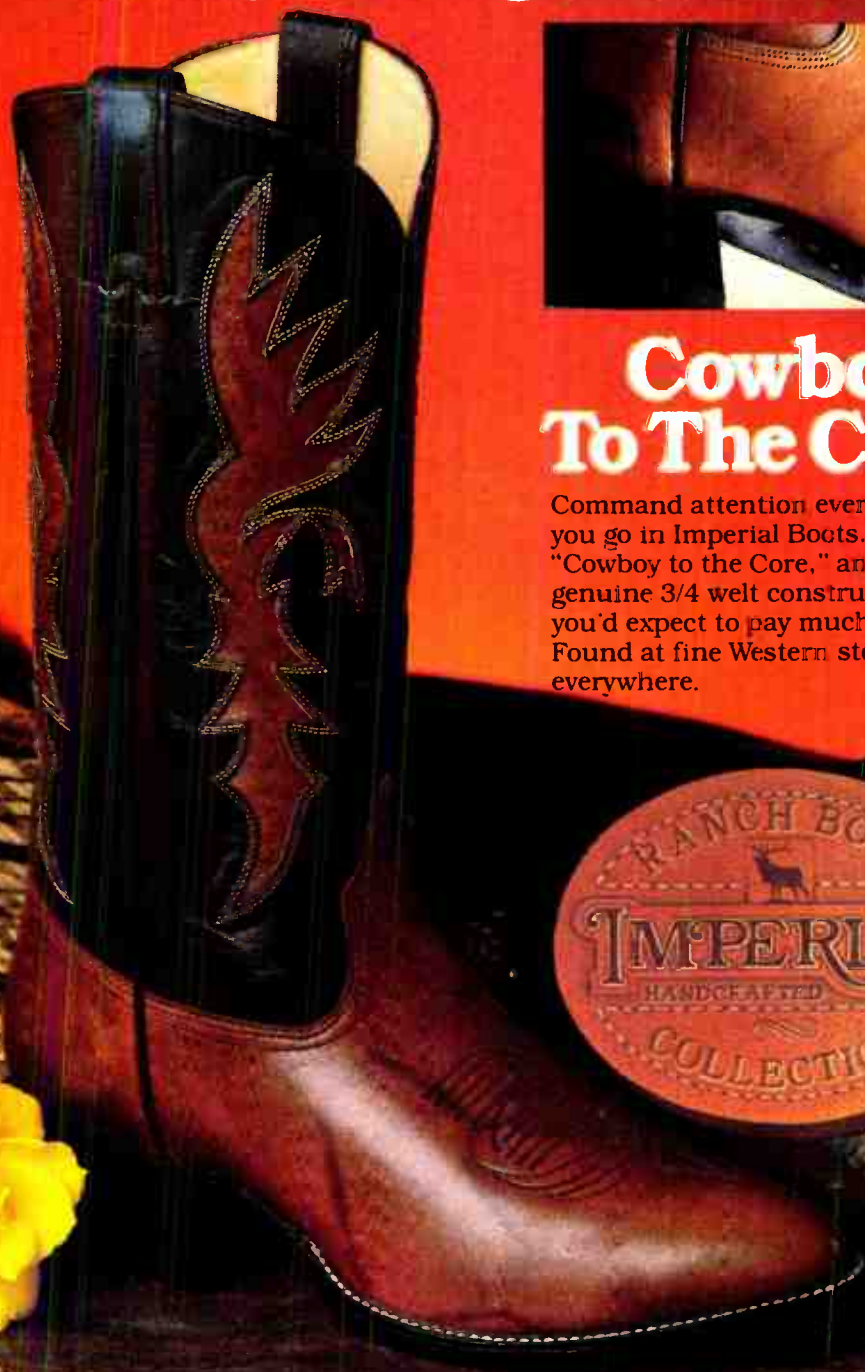
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Just walk into your participating record store, pick up an entry form and get clued in to murder. Discover what the murder weapon was. When the murder was committed. The motive for the murder. And where the body was found. Then, identify the killer.

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May the best detective win. And what you'll win is the National Grand Prize.



The National Grand Prize.

As the National Grand Prize winner of "The Clue Is In The Music" sweepstakes you'll gain notoriety all over the country when you win the ultimate in mystery and intrigue. A walk-on part in "Murder She Wrote," the top-rated, nationally televised show starring Angela Lansbury.



\$5000 reward offered.

Just grab your trenchcoat and go to your local MCA Country record retailer. That's where you'll also have a shot at a \$5,000 reward from American Express Gift Cheque. There's a one-of-a-kind album cover that holds evidence being sought in connection with "The Clue Is In The Music" murder mystery.

This evidence is hidden in one record store in the United States. Find it and find yourself \$5,000 richer.



More prizes you'll prize.

Once you enter the sweepstakes you'll also have a chance to win what any true mystery lover would prize. Eight sets of 14 Sherlock Holmes mystery/thriller video classics, featuring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce, in a special collector's edition from Key Video. • 500 copies of Lawrence Sanders' newest bestseller, *Timothy's Game*. It's the kind of hardbound mystery from Putnam Books that hard-boiled detectives lose sleep over. • 250 paperback gift sets (four per set) of the most thrilling Agatha Christie mysteries from Berkley Books. • And 500 "Murder She Wrote" T-shirts from the USA Cable Network, where you can watch "Murder She Wrote" six nights a week.

MCA country artists are prime suspects.

Now here's your first clue. Look for these great MCA Country releases from these MCA artists.



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east coast, and we would like to see him in concert.

Could you get an address for us to write to him? We would like to let him know that we support and enjoy his music.

Donna Lynne
Richmond, Virginia

We've received lots of mail for Dwight asking for an address to write him. So here it is: Dwight Yoakam, 15840 Ventura Blvd. #465, Encino, CA 91436.—Ed.

Kathy Mattea / 1—Bob Allen / 0

The first time I ever heard of Kathy Mattea was three or four years ago, when I heard her perform in one of the beer tents at the Missouri State Fair. I was so impressed that as soon as I could find it, I bought her album, *Walk the Way the Wind Blows*. Saw her again in 1987 when she opened for George Strait in Pittsburg, Kansas. And again she blew me away. As fate would have it, I read Bob Allen's review of her latest album *Untasted Honey* in your May/June issue, the one where he says she "falls flat" on "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses," the same day I watched *TNN's Crook and Chase*, the same day, incidentally, that this program's Top 10 list showed, you guessed it, "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses" as Number One.

If this is the result of Kathy Mattea falling flat, I can't wait until she hits her stride!

Becky Hamar
Nevada, Missouri

Goodbye to O.B. McClinton

I noticed that O.B. McClinton was not mentioned in Final Bow for 1987 in your People section in the May/June issue.

I hope this was an oversight as I feel he contributed so much to country music.

Norma Weishan
Ellicottville, New York

We covered O.B.'s untimely death in People in the January/February issue. For more, see Hazel's column this time.—Ed.

A Tribute To Pappy Daily

I read about the passing of H.W. "Pappy" Daily, in the People section in *Country Music's* May/June issue, and though I never had the privilege of meeting him in person, I knew him through letters and phone calls.

I can only guess, but I have an idea there are many just like me that Pappy inspired to greater achievement. I know I will never forget him.

Marie Kliever
Klamath Falls, Oregon

Hazel and Dr. Hook

I've loved all types of music from the very first time I heard Elvis back in 1955. I really enjoy *Country Music*

Magazine, especially your column, Hazel.

I'm hoping you will answer two questions for me: 1) Are you the same Hazel Smith mentioned on several Dr. Hook albums, including a few writing credits? 2) What happened—why did they break up? What's happening with Dennis and Ray? Any plans to record together or separately?

Gerry Sweeney
Holbrook, New York

Hazel says she is the same Hazel mentioned in Dr. Hook's songs and that Dennis is staying home writing songs and raising his son, while Ray is hooking out separately.—Ed.

Reba McEntire Answers Her Mail

In reference to the letter, "Furious Father: Does Reba Care?" in the May/June issue, Mr. Wagener did receive his personalized autograph picture, and in return we got a thank-you note thanking Reba for her "kindness" and "caring" before his letter was printed in your magazine. Mr. Wagener's letter was not lost in the move, his request was only delayed because of the move.

Due to touring obligations, Reba is on the road sometimes weeks at a time. Therefore, when special requests come through the office, they have to be put aside until she returns.

Mr. Wagener, I have never seen one person love and adore her fans more than Reba does. How could any entertainer who offers two back-stage passes to every member of her fan club for them to meet her after a show "not care"? Reba's fans do come first, and she truly appreciates each of you.

Cindy Owen, President
Reba McEntire Int'l Fan Club
Nashville, Tennessee



Yes to Lynn Jones

I very much enjoyed Patrick Carr's article on David Lynn Jones in the May/June issue. I agree with his observation that David Lynn's music contains a "yes" message.

I've been a country music fan all my life, but this is the first time in a long time that I've ever been really excited about a new artist. After attending several of David Lynn's concerts and listen-

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Editors-at-large
**Michael Bane, Patrick Carr
Bob Allen**

Art Director
Jan Foster

Associate Editor
Helen Barnard

Art Associate
Germaine Egan Cassidy

Contributing Editors
**Peter Guralnick, Paula Lovell Hooker,
Leonard Kamsler, Rich Kienzle,
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Associate Publisher/Advertising Director
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Publisher's Assistants
**Annemarie Jocka, Norma Segarra
Darlene Cavanaugh**

Office Assistants
Anne Barnard, Bernadette Collins

Mascot
Margie

Editorial and Executive Offices

342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118,
New York, New York 10173
Telephone (212) 503-0770.

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Advertising Offices

West Coast, Leonard Mendelson,

P.O. Box 5489
Santa Monica, California 90405.
Telephone (213) 207-4948

Ohio/Michigan, Pete Kelly,

Peter Kelly Associates
725 South Adams Road,
Birmingham, Michigan 48011.
Telephone (313) 642-1228.

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Fans' 50th Statler Concert

Rainy Terrell and Joan Respass couldn't let their 50th Statler Concert go by without presenting each Brother with a plaque which read (in part), "Tonight makes concert number 50 and we ain't even started yet!" Pictured counter-clockwise from top left, Jimmy Fortune with Joan, Don Reid with Rainy, Don receiving his plaque, Jimmy at the mike and Harold Reid and Phil Balsley receiving their plaques. All this took place in Ozark, Alabama.

ing to this man's music, I can assure you that we are in store for some great stuff.

Keep up the excellent coverage of the country music scene. Yours is the best magazine out there.

Gordon Brazzell
Mountain Home, Arkansas

want to do—of course, we will continue to go to their concerts, but we'd like to go to their hometown of Staunton, Virginia, too.

Rainy Terrell and Joan Respass
Deatsville, Alabama

Fans' 50th Statler Concert

We enjoy your magazine very much, especially articles on The Statler Brothers. I have been a Statler fan for as long as I can remember. The blend of their voices plus Don's unique voice make them by far my all-time favorites. On February 19, 1988, in Ozark, Alabama, my best friend and I saw our 50th Statler concert. That night we presented The Statlers with a plaque from us for all the pleasure they had given us through their music. Harold took the time to read his during the show and asked us to please stand and be recognized. It was very exciting and another great "Statler memory."

There are only a few things we still

Correction on Kenny Rogers

I've been a real fan of Kenny Rogers for a long time. I'm also in the Kenny Rogers Fan Club. I'm writing to you about the address that you gave to Mary A. Nieman in the May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine*. So her son can write to Kenny. The address you gave is incorrect.

Here is the correct address: Kenny Rogers Fan Club, 1516 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

I know that you will be glad that someone is aware of the change in address.

Cynthia Anne Kowalezyk
New Bedford, Massachusetts
Our readers don't miss a trick. You're right, the address above is the new fan club address for Kenny Rogers.—Ed.

Rock 'n' Roll is Back... and it never sounded better!

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The Everly Brothers



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If you thought the great days of rock 'n' roll were gone forever...if you still haunt your radio waiting to hear your favorites—welcome to the most spectacular recording event of the decade. TIME-LIFE MUSIC proudly presents:

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Remember the glow of those old jukeboxes and all the wonderful music they held: Elvis, The Everly Brothers, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, The Platters, Fats Domino, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry?



Jerry Lee Lewis

Boys and The Supremes. Every album features 22 classic songs.

All of them have been digitally remastered, so the sound quality equals today's best recordings, and they come to you with informative liner notes and complete discographies.

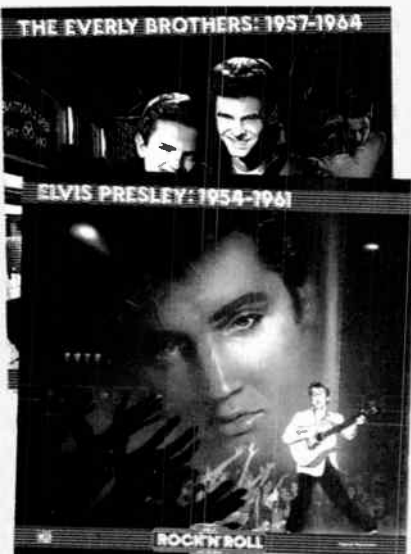
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Bless You...Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash is one of the greatest. I'm a long-time friend and sister-in-law of Wynona Stout. When she was dying of cancer in Eisenhower Hospital in Rancho Mirage, California, Johnny Cash came in to see her and pray with the family three times. John has been her all-time favorite. And he was the one to put life in her the last days of her life.

We, the family of Wynona Stout, will always thank and bless him. It was like a miracle when he was in the same hospital she was in her last days. We thought he was one of the most caring and loving men we have ever met. We will bless him and love him always.

Nina Stout
South Gate, California

A Frazzle of Frizzells

Is Lefty Frizzell's son, David, the Frizzell that sang with Dottie West's daughter or did Lefty also have a brother by the name of David? Also what was the name of the son that was married to Dottie West's daughter?

I have a son that says Lefty has a brother by the name of David.

Rene Jewett
McGill, Nevada

David Frizzell is Lefty's brother. He is the same David that sang with Dottie West's daughter, Shelly West. Shelly married Lefty and David's younger brother, Allen. The couple were separated, then divorced in 1985. Got that? -Ed.

110% on Louise Mandrell

I'm writing to thank you so much for featuring Louise Mandrell in 20 Questions in the May/June issue. It was really interesting—just great!! I've seen Louise in concert, and she puts on a dynamite performance—there's never a dull moment. You always leave knowing that she puts 110% into every show.

I'm a country music fan, but if it hadn't been for the television show *Barbara Mandrell & The Mandrell Sisters*, I'm almost certain that I would not have become one. Louise, Irlene and Barbara are all special ladies.

Marie Marr
Hoyt, Kansas

Country Music Elections

In this year of elections I wish to enter my choices. They are as follows: Pres.—Willie Nelson/Vice (not Vice Pres., just Vice)—Waylon Jennings.

For the Heads of the following offices: A.T.F.—Hank Jr. He knows all about

Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Dept. of the Interior—Dolly Parton. She knows all about mountains and valleys. Ambassador to Texas—David Allan Coe, born in Oh-My-No (Ohio), moved to Dallas. D.E.A.—Jimmy Buffet, working in a dive for twenty-six dollars, spending it all on grass. Board of Mines—Loretta Lynn, the coal miner's daughter. Dept. of Justice—Johnny Paycheck, "She got the goldmine, I got the shaft." D.O.T.—Dave Dudley: Six days on the road. Dept. of the Treasury—Boxcar Willie.

There are many other offices to be filled and many other country greats to fill them. These are just a few. After all, I did not put anyone in the IRS. Maybe we should do away with it and everyone pay a flat 5% of their earnings, and do away with the long forms that nobody understands anyway.

To cut the military spending, let's put in a panel of housewives. As we all know, they are the best at running things under a budget.

For myself, all I need is a Tennessee Bottle, all I want is an Arkansas Bride, all I can see is an Ozark Mountain Sunrise. (Kenny said that and I live it, but I haven't found the bride.)

Dave Brown
Flippin, Arkansas

This gets my vote.—R.D.B.

Ricky Skaggs' Latest

Where do your record reviewers come from? I've pretty much always been a "read the review and like the album anyway" guy. However, at this moment I'm listening to Ricky Skaggs *Comin' Home to Stay* album and thumbing through your May/June 1988 issue.

I ran across the review of the album and thought, this is great, I'll see how my opinion compares to the professionals. *I was shocked!* Send Michael Bane to *Rolling Stone* if he wants to hear David Lee Roth. How could anyone not appreciate a song like "Thanks Again"—that's what country music is all about! The quality of the album as a whole is so much better than 95% of the other country albums being recorded today. Sure, the album is full of "Jesus, true love, the nuclear family, sensitive men and enough sincerity to gag a pony." So what! That's Ricky! If you want beer drinking-honky-tonkin' stuff, just drag out one of your Hank Jr. albums! (It doesn't matter which one—they're all the same!)

Being a songwriter myself, it makes

Correction

Cover photo and color photo on page 34 of the July/August issue were taken by Melodie Gimple. We regret the omission.

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me feel good when a song says something! Anyone with a pencil, table napkin and a third grade education can write a beer-drinking song!

I'm just glad that some people like Ricky Skaggs (and Steve Wariner, to mention another) still have the musical taste to put out good material with quality. They also don't try to reach every economic class in America with every album. Some people think that a person who works for the minimum wage in a factory won't buy an album unless it has at least four songs about being poor, working hard or being on welfare. That's crazy!

I just wish the people putting out good material that have the talent were the ones getting the awards. They deserve them, and they're much more "entertaining."

Jeff Hudson
Lafayette, Tennessee

Honest Bane—But Why?

When record reviewers offer anything less than lavish praise about records by readers' favorite artists, those readers tend to respond with letters questioning the reviewers' taste, sanity, integrity, ethics, morality and even parentage. Although I am less than



Dolly In His Heart

Fan Ron Davis of Simi Valley, California, caught every taping of Dolly's ABC/TV show and the opening of Dollywood this year at Pigeon Forge. Pictured here, Dolly at the May 1st opening parade and at the press conference in her new Dolly Parton Celebrity Theater on the Dollywood grounds.

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ecstatic over Michael Bane's review of Ricky Skaggs' *Comin' Home to Stay*, this is not such a letter.

At least Mr. Bane had the honesty to acknowledge where he is coming from, that he has "never been a particularly big fan of Ricky Skaggs and the bluegrass side of the family." (I guess it does take a certain amount of integrity to own up to personal defects such as this.)

What I want to say is to the assignment editor: *Country Music Magazine* has a staff that consists of writers with a wide variety of perspectives—enough so that you certainly could have assigned someone with a basic appreciation of Ricky Skaggs to review a Ricky Skaggs record. I don't expect blind adulation, but what Mr. Bane sees as "enough sincerity to gag a pony" is exactly what many Ricky Skaggs fans want.

Jerry Barney

Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Allen vs. Anderson

In response to your review of John Anderson's *Blue Skies Again* in Record Reviews in the May/June issue, Bob Allen must not like John Anderson. This is the second album he has reviewed and cut him down. We John Anderson fans like his music no matter what. At least I do. If I believed everything that Mr. Allen wrote, I wouldn't be a fan of John Anderson's.

I watched him perform March 21, 1987, at the WWVA *Jamboree* and thought he did an excellent job performing. I've always considered him a great singer.

Brenda Norman

West Lafayette, Ohio

Allen Right About Russell Band

I was delighted to see Bob Allen's review of The Tom Russell Band's *Road to Bayamon* album in the May/June issue. I've been a fan of Tom's for a decade now, and it's nice to see that your magazine recognizes that a major record label is not a prerequisite for a first class album. Hopefully, the recent major label debuts of contemporaries Nanci Griffith, Lyle Lovett and Darden Smith will open the door for the Tom Russells and Joe Elys.

Keep up the good work.

Ed Becker

Mount Olive, Illinois

Score now stands at Allen / 1—other reviewers / 0.—Ed.

Send Letters to the Editor to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Letters.

Dottie West Is Best

Your great letters section moved me to write about my own favorite singer, Dottie West.

For me, Dottie is unmatched in her ability to appeal to ear, mind and heart all at once. Because so many of Dottie West's songs are sung in a style which combines tenderness with intellect, she has caused me to shed more tears than all other singers put together. She tells me why her heart rules her mind—her rendition of the old human story.

If you've heard Dottie sing "Once You Were Mine," "Desperado," "Crying," "If You Go Away" or "We've Got Tonight," you know what I mean.

I'm happy Dottie is on tour, as well as with the Opry. William R. Etheridge
Columbia, Missouri

Here's What Happened to Clark Kessenger

In response to the inquiry about Clark Kessenger and his music in the May/June Letters section, Kessenger, one of the greatest old-time fiddlers, made approximately 35 old 78 r.p.m. records in the 1920's with his cousin Luches on the Brunswick label. They billed themselves as The Kessenger Brothers. An excellent re-issue of 12 of these early cuts is available on *The Kessenger Brothers/1929-30* (County 536).

Clark quit the music business during the Depression to become a house painter, a trade he pursued in his native St. Albans, West Virginia, until his retirement. In 1964 or 1965 he was located by folklorist Ken Davidson who recorded him on his Kanawha label. During the next few years Kessenger won a number of fiddle contests, appeared on the *Today* show, and was featured on a number of folklife festivals including the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. He suffered a heart attack while on stage at a fiddlers contest in Virginia, and never played professionally again. He passed away in the early 1970's.

Kessenger's two fine Kanawha albums were later re-issued by County Records and are still available: *The Legend of Clark Kessenger*, (County 733) and *Sweet Bunch of Daisies*, (County 747). A third Kanawha album was re-issued by Folkways. A fourth album is still available on the Rounder label, *Clark Kessenger* (Rounder 0004). All these albums are available from County Sales, Box 191, Floyd, Virginia 24091, Down Home Music in El Cerrito, California, and Roundup Records in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as at major record stores.

David Freeman

Roanoke, Virginia

Buried Treasures has nothing on the Letters section! Thanks to all Clark's fans who wrote in.—Ed.

Found: Martha Carson

A member of Martha Carson's fan club sent me the clipping from your magazine asking, "Where is Martha Carson?" I would like to answer the question for you.

Martha Carson is still singing her great gospel songs. She still makes personal appearances. Just recently she was a guest on the Ernest Tubbs Record Shop *Midnight Jamboree* that Justin Tubbs hosts every Saturday night after the Opry.

I am president of Martha's fan club. May I extend an invitation to anyone wishing to join. The dues are \$7.50 in the United States, \$8.50 in Canada and \$10.00 per person for foreign countries. Any further details, write me—Margaret Helmer, Rural Route 1, Box 226-A, Edmonton, KY 42129.

Margaret Helmer
Edmonton, Kentucky

Disk jockey Bob Grady at WJTH Calhoun, Georgia, called in to say he caught Martha at a two-day country/gospel festival in Calhoun last fall.—Ed.

...And David Wills

I am writing in response to the letter in the May/June issue of *Country Music Magazine* asking about David Wills. David came out of Memphis, Tennessee, and I was first able to see him there when he opened a show for Charlie Rich in the early 1970's. At the time I felt, as I do now, that he was one of the purest country singers I had ever heard. I will list the recordings that I have of David's: *Barrooms to Bedrooms* (Epic KE 33353) /1975, *Everybody's Country* (Epic KE 33548)/1975, *New Beginnings* (RCA MHL1 8516/ mini LP)/1984. One additional single released in 1980 on Liberty/United Records, Inc. and, I think, one of his best was: "The Light of My Life (Has Gone Out Again)" (UA-X1375-Y).

David and his family have been living in Nashville where he has been doing a lot of songwriting for various artists. *New Beginnings* listed the following address for his fan club: David Wills Fan Club, P.O. Box 24413, Nashville, Tennessee 37202-4413.

Chuck Hart
Paragould, Arkansas

D.J. Bob Grady knew about David Wills, too, and about Claude Grey, mentioned in Letters back in January/February 1987. He says Claude is living in Texas and had a single out on an independent label in Nashville last year.—Ed.

Whatever Happened to Gary Stewart?

I am writing this letter in regards to Gary Stewart. I've been listening to Gary since the early 1970's.

We have many Gary Stewart fans in Alabama and all us Alabamians are curious to find out what happened to him. There has not been a voice like Gary's since Gary. I heard a rumor that he was down in Florida singing. I would surely go to any part of Florida to talk to him and hopefully get him to come to Alabama for a concert.

A friend of mine has 46 acres ready for a Gary Stewart concert.

J.E. Spriggs
Wetumpka, Alabama

As we mentioned in Letters in the November/December 1987 issue, Gary is at work in Florida preparing new material. Maybe the promise of those 46 acres will bring him out of hiding.—Ed.



Susan Wright caught up with busy star Gary Morris at his fan club picnic.

Gary Morris—Great Guy

I love your magazine and look forward to every issue. My favorite is Gary Morris.

I had the privilege of meeting Gary two years ago. He is warm and friendly. After my husband was killed in an accident, Gary wrote me a note of encouragement. Each time since then, when I've had the opportunity to talk with Gary for a few minutes, he always remembers and asks how my seven-year-old son and I are.

Gary is a very talented and diversified performer. In addition to singing, he has appeared in several series, his own *TNN* special, and has been performing in *Les Miserables* on Broadway, his second operatic performance. As of February 28, 1988, Gary was named national spokesperson for the National Ataxia Foundation (NAF). Ataxias are progressive, neurological disorders that affect balance and coordination, some causing premature death due to complications. Through Gary's involvement, public awareness will be increased.

Gary, you make us proud to be Gary Morris fans. May God bless you.

Susan Wright
Nashville, Arkansas



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MORE COE

The David Allan Coes announce the birth of a 7-pound baby girl named Shayanne Sherrill. This is David Allan and Judy Lynn's third child. Born in Jefferson City, Missouri, the young lady was named for the great record producer Billy Sherrill.

SPEAKING OF BILLY SHERRILL

Prayers went up like the rain reversing when Music Row learned that Billy Sherrill went into the hospital with what he thought was equilibrium problems when in reality he required open heart surgery right then and there. Thank God, he was spared, but it was a close call. Three valves were replaced and pulmonary problems followed. At this writing, though still hospitalized, the producer/songwriter is reportedly making progress. To this I say, Thank you, God.

TALKING WITH JESSI

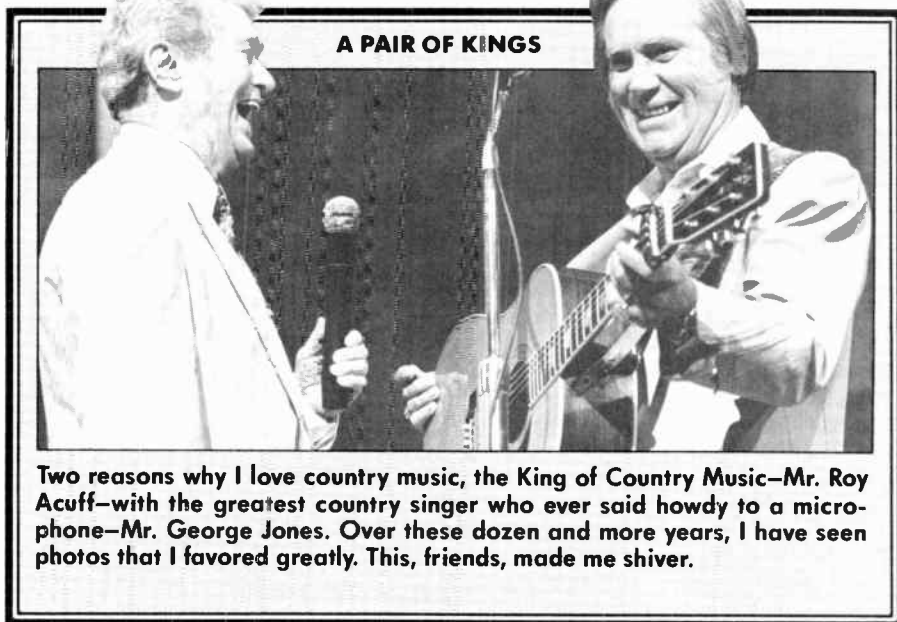
Pretty and talented Jessi Colter related to me how 'finding a proper dress' is always the hardest part. She was concerned about what to wear to the Nation's Capitol when hubby Waylor Jennings accepted the Horatio Alger Award along with Carol Burnett, Senator Bob Dole and several more famed folks. Directly from the do, I hear that Ms. Jessi was the fairest of the fair. But isn't she always?

CHARLY MCCLAIN AND HUBBY WAYNE MASSEY LABEL HOP OVER TO POLYGRAM

The hubby/wife duo of Charly and Wayne maneuvered over to the Polygram label and have been recording Miss McClain with Wayne and Jim Cotton producing. They promised me the product would be great.

DADDY HONORED

To tell you the truth, I was impressed when I found out Kris Kristofferson



Two reasons why I love country music, the King of Country Music—Mr. Roy Acuff—with the greatest country singer who ever said howdy to a microphone—Mr. George Jones. Over these dozen and more years, I have seen photos that I favored greatly. This, friends, made me shiver.

was honored as "Father of the Year" by the National Father's Day Committee. I wasn't aware of Kris' accomplishment in the area of fatherhood, and I do congratulate Mr. KK for this honor.

Another 'Daddy Honor' is the Ricky Skaggs single "Thanks Again," penned by Jim Rushing. By now, hopefully, this favorite of mine is a standard in better circles, like yours.

FARAWAY PLACES WITH STRANGE-SOUNDING NAMES

The Nashville Bluegrass Band did in fact go overseas during late springtime. Working for the State Department, the group toured the following unlikely places—Qatar, Iraq, Bangladesh, Egypt, Israel and Bahrain, an island in the Persian Gulf. Admitting to myself that I did not know it all, I turned to the encyclopedia and looked up Bahrain to see where it was located. So small, the island isn't even on the world globe. These places are far away and spell strange. I'm not even really sure just how to pronounce them. I do, however, know the lyrics to "I'm Walking the Floor Over You" and that qualifies me to write this column!

FIRST LADY AND QUEEN—BOTH STARGAZERS

First Lady Nancy Reagan and I have more in common than meets the eye-to-eye. It is that both of us are stargazers. See, Nancy is into astrology and believes in the stars, and I try to see them as often as I can.

Well, the stars lined up for me in Nashville, Tennessee, recently. In living color and right before my eyes stood Alabama, Merle Haggard, The Judds, Randy Travis, Kathy Mattea, The O'Kanes, K.T. Oslin, Restless Heart and Ricky Van Shelton. This was where the stars shine—during the Marlboro Press Conference, at the Vanderbilt Hotel in downtown Music City. I've already told you about the Tour and that as of this writing, 14 good American cities have already seen parts of the above line-up performing. Come fall, 16 more red-blooded American cities will enjoy all or part of the show too. Exciting? You betcha.

Back to the press conference. All the top media folks, including yours truly, were in attendance...folks like *Country Music's* Patrick Carr, *The Tennessean's*

Reporter: Hazel Smith

Editor: Rochelle Friedman

People

Robert Oermann and Thomas Goldsmith, *The Banner's* Michael McCall, all the TV folks in town, a rep from *Time Magazine* and God knows who else. Also the label folks turned out in fine form. Roy Wunsch sure looked like he was the one to head up CBS, and by God he does do just that! I also saw Joe Galante from RCA and Steve Popovich from Polygram. Janet Azrak represented Warner Bros.

Alabama has sold a lot of records, but Merle Haggard has put in the most time and has probably broken the most hearts, so press, as we were, gave Haggard the biggest hand. Greatness just oozes from his presence. Besides, when he's on, there ain't nobody can touch him. Merle was escorted by good guy, Frank Mull. I want this said, on the level, once and forever—The Judds are lookers. Naomi 'Mama' Judd looks best in photos; however, Wynonna 'Baby'



What a line-up! Pictured from bottom left are: (seated) K.T. Oslin and Randy Travis; (second row) Merle Haggard, Wynonna Judd, Naomi Judd and Ricky Van Shelton; (third row) George Strait and Kathy Mattea; (fourth row) Jamie O'Hara and Kieran Kane of The O'Kanes; (fifth row) Jeff Cook and Randy Owen of Alabama; (sixth row) Greg Jennings of Restless Heart and Teddy Gentry of Alabama; (seventh row) Dave Innis of Restless Heart and Mark Herndon of Alabama; (last row) John Dittrich, Larry Stewart and Paul Gregg of Restless Heart.

THE CREAM OF THE CROP



Kitty Wells, Del Woods, Jan Howard, Skeeter Davis, Minnie Pearl, Dolly Parton, Jeanne Pruett, Norma Jean, Jean Shepard. In the back row are Billy Deaton and Johnny Wright. These country greats got together at the Ryman Auditorium for the taping of the *Dolly Show* last spring and we couldn't pass up a chance to feature it in the magazine.

Judd is so beautiful in person. I'd go as far as to say that she is one of the most beautiful girls in Nashville show biz.

On to Randy Travis who looked naive, kind, cute, talented and tired. One of our better singers, Randy moved slowly through the crowd after the press conference. The golden boy of country music is still the country boy fulfilling a hillbilly dream. I do hope he finds a lot of happiness along the way. Lord knows, he deserves it, as hard as he works. Kathy Mattea made the tour, and I for one was happy to see this. Show promoter Ben Farrell really likes Kathy as a person as well as an entertainer. She is a great performer whose star is just starting to rise. With a couple of Number One singles chalked up, the West Virginia lady could very well be the CMA's Female Entertainer in the next year or so. She has the class, the presence and the voice, plus a dangerously good producer in Allen Reynolds. I'd vote for Kathy.

Also on hand were The O'Kanes, who have their second album out. With their different sound, they should round out the tour nicely. Jamie O'Hara, who is the 'O' in this duo, is a first-name buddy of mine. We have hung out nights until the morning milkman has come and gone. He and partner Kieran Kane have penned several hit songs for others and are now doing it for themselves. K.T. Oslin? What can I say? This girl is

after my own heart. She is writing and singing for me! Surely she didn't intend it to be this way, but it is true. Her songs fit me like Spandex (Heaven forbid). Besides, she sings a notch above most. Makes me proud to be female too. Hey, K.T., do you have a K.T. flag I can fly?

Restless Heart leaves me unrelentless. Those guys are so cute and they sing good, too. Personally, I find the boys to be very nice and predict they will go far. With one gold album behind them, Restless Heart gives a great balance to the show. These young men will draw young folks out to see our great country music, just as Alabama did before them. Ricky Van Shelton is on the upswing, and there should be a continuation of Number Ones for him. His first album, *Wild Eyed Dream*, certified gold, and he has two Number One singles to his credit. I look to see him in silk undershirts for his next album photo. I figure promoter Farrell has excellent hillbilly taste to choose Ricky Van as a newcomer for this exclusive tour. And little old soothsayer me sees a very bright future for Mr. Shelton...how could it not be with Roy Wunsch, Joe Casey and Mary Ann McCready as CBS cheerleaders!!

Now let's talk about the man of my dreams, George Strait. Girls, hear me out. Really, I like all of you. So, please! Don't get jealous. Only I met with

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People

George Strait. I mean, there we were, eyeball to George! Can you dig it? He was a heartbeat away. The curl of the left lip was in touching distance from me. And being the upstanding lady that mama raised, I just gave him the street address of my house and inquired as to how much he charged to do personal appearances! Girls, I would not lie, George Strait is the prettiest man I have ever laid eyes on in my life. I swear before God, I told him so. I couldn't help it. My heart was doing ninety, and I wanted to do time for bigamy everytime I looked at him. All I could think of was, "Sing to me, darling"... "The Chair," "Does Fort Worth Ever Cross Your Mind" or "Mary Had a Little Lamb"! I didn't care. Listen girls, George has got a scar under his chin that I hope to lay claim to. Yes, rumor has it that I bit George. (Dream on, country girl.)

George continues to fill houses everywhere he goes. The Strait choice for the show showed great taste. Genuine talent. Let's thank Marlboro for the shows, folks. And I want to thank you fans also. By now I trust that you know that for every ticket purchased for these shows, one dollar goes to Second Harvest, our country's only national food bank. Have fun and feed the hungry at the same time.

If this isn't enough, the Marlboro folks are also sponsoring talent contests in each of the 30 cities with Grand Prizes to be awarded in the fall at the end of the tour. Hats off to stars, Philip Morris/Marlboro, Ben Farrell and Varnell Enterprises. Last but not least,



Roy Wunch and Ricky Van Shelton share the gold.



The Dillards. Left to right are Denver Pyle, Dean Webb, Mitch Wayne, Doug Dillard and Rodney Dillard.

hats off to you, the fans, who support the live shows, buy recordings, join fan clubs and make all of this possible. We owe it all to you.

THEM DARLING DILLARDS

Years ago **The Dillards** stumbled upon a job as **The Darlings** on **The Andy Griffith Show** on TV. Recently the band reunited with actor Denver Pyle, who played the part of **Briscoe Darling** on the ever-popular show. Please know, I saw this and can attest that Pyle was playing, not sipping the jug!

For your information, Doug Dillard lives here in Nashville and is playing around town and at bluegrass festivals. Rodney Dillard spends most of his time at Silver Dollar City in Branson, Missouri, where he performs everyday for the tourists who invade this garden spot of the Ozarks.

MORE STARS ADDED TO WALKWAY

The following artists placed their names in stars at the Country Music Hall of Fame during the week of Fan Fair: **Eddy Raven**, **George Morgan** (posthumously, thanks to his family, friends, fans and daughter Lorrie Morgan's fan club), **Highway 101** and **The Judds**. The Judds also presented the Foundation with costumes they wore to open the CMA Awards Show in 1985. **Mama Naomi** also presented a nurse's uniform while **Baby Wynonna** donated some high school memories—or should I say memorabilia. Folks, if I were famous, I could fill up three Halls of Fame and still have enough junk to run

out the door into the street!

O.B. McClinton's star was placed in the Walkway also. You true-blue fans know that O.B. passed away in September 1987, after a long, painful struggle with cancer. Friends begged and collected the needed dollars for the star, and O.B. saw it just a few days before his demise. Don't you know his dark eyes twinkled when he saw *his* star for the Walkway at the Country Music Hall of Fame. And don't your eyes tear up from missing his talent, wit and greatness. I'm happy to report that **Dwight Yoakam** placed his star in the cement, too. Nobody was prouder or happier than the long-legged boy from Kentucky via Ohio, Tennessee and California. He does love the old-time country music. And nobody sings the old songs with more conviction than Dwight.

MAYDAY FOR RACHEL AND RICHARD DENNISON

Rachel Dennison of *9 to 5* TV fame and hubby **Richard Dennison**, member of **Acapella**, the harmony singing group on the *Dolly* TV show, are the proud parents of a baby daughter. The baby is the niece of the great **Dolly Parton**.

LITTLE CRYSTAL AND BIG NED RAY

Crystal Gayle and porcelain designer **Helen Boehm** presented Tennessee Governor **Ned Ray McWherter** with a fine porcelain replica of the Tennessee state flower, the iris. The Governor reciprocated by presenting Crystal with a plaque designating her Outstanding Tennessean. Crystal is the proud

People

owner of a shop, her namesake, that features elegant crystal, stemware and china.

A RECORD CALLED SIGNATURES

If you're into songs and songwriters, then you will be into this record called *Signatures* on RCA. Utilizing the talents of **Don Schlitz**, **Bob McDill**, **Mark Wright**, **Rhonda Kye Fleming** and **Mike Reid**, how could it miss? All the songs are good, but I'd have to say my favorite is the Bob McDill-penned tune, "Song of the South." If you don't have a record with a copy of this song on it, I suggest you buy this one. Believe you me, you won't be sorry. Killer song!

DOLLY/TALES

All smiles, Tennessee's all-star undisputed Queen of Hearts and music, **Dolly Parton**, doesn't seem the least bit disturbed that her television show has been cancelled. I swear, I am convinced that Dolly Parton, who is one of the sharpest females on either side of the Mississippi, would have been much better off in the TV department if she had used homefolks and kin folks and left Hollywood and Rodeo Drive to the natives. She could have kept herself, her music and her show in Tennessee.



Our Miss Dolly



Don Schlitz, Bob McDill, Mark Wright, Rhonda Kye Fleming and Mike Reid—their music makes up the *Signatures* album.

But we never have to worry about Dolly. She is busying herself making a movie titled *Steel Magnolias*. Then she will busy herself making a phonograph album with Tennessee roots, reportedly bluegrass; however, if I had to make an educated guess, I'd say it would lean toward the *Trio* album or that great *Roses In the Snow* album that **Emmylou Harris** had out about 10 years ago.

All of you know how I get in the middle of everything if I can. Well, it was my luck to learn this wonderful story. Dolly was home in Nashville and was planning to meet with her producer on the album. His name is **Ricky Skaggs**. Dolly'd been in California so much she didn't have a good guitar at home and wanted Skaggs to bring one. Neither did she have a good tape recorder at the house, so she asked Skaggs to bring one of them, too. This was too funny for words. I said to the great **Don Warden**, Dolly's road manager, "Poor little thing, she ain't got no money, so somebody needs to bring her a guitar and a tape recorder?" Warden allowed as how we needed to do a benefit for Dolly, and I figured the perfect spot would be the Station Inn. Poor musicians can always count on a benefit at the Station Inn in Nashville. And you know, I've heard some awful good bluegrass music there too! But as I said, don't worry about our Miss Dolly. A late rumor is that she will be developing a 30-minute sitcom for ABC. No word as to whether she'll be in it or not. But, whatever, it just proves you can't keep that country gal down.

MOVIE-MAKING HOYT

On the heels of the made-for-TV movie, *Desperado: Avalanche at Devil's Ridge*, an NBC Movie of the week, **Hoyt Axton** found himself in the beautiful Bitter Root Valley near Hamilton, Montana, filming *Waiting for Salazar*. The latter is a Disney project.

MILLER MIGHT BE INTO MOVIES, TOO

Roger Miller has made a blooming mint on the Broadway show *Big River*, for which he wrote the music. Now he is discussing the possibility of bringing the hit show to the motion picture screen. Another rich hillbilly getting richer.

MOORHEAD, MISSISSIPPI NEVER SHINED BRIGHTER THAN WHEN IT SHINED ON JOHNNY RUSSELL'S DAY

The entire population and then some turned out to see their favorite son, **Big Johnny Russell**, who had his own day in his hometown. TV host **Ralph Emery** flew down for the big day at Mississippi Delta Junior College. Proceeds from the sold-out concert established a scholarship in Johnny's name at the school. Some friends who joined Johnny for the celebration were **Stella Parton**, **Little David Wilkins**, **Dickey Lee** and **Alex Houston**. Folks with good taste who sent Johnny congratulatory telegrams were **Dolly Parton**, **Chet Atkins**, **Alabama**, **Randy Travis**, **Johnny Cash**, **Lawrence Welk**, **Conway Twitty**, **Loretta Lynn**, **Ricky Skaggs**, **The Whites**, **Charley Pride**, **Roy Acuff** and the Grand Ole Opry's main man, manager **Hal Durham**.

THE GREAT DOC WATSON HONORS HIS LATE SON, MERLE WATSON

It was a great day in the North Carolina mountains. **Doc Watson** was thrilled with the turnout of entertainers, especially the fact that his old friend, **Earl Scruggs**, came out of a six-year retirement to pick at the event at Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, N.C. There was one young Japanese banjoist who heard that Scruggs was gonna pick the five-string again, and he called from Tokyo to verify that it was true. The fan

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married his betrothed, and traveled to the event for his honeymoon. Louise (Mrs. Earl) Scruggs told me that she'd never witnessed such an emotional scene. When the show ended, the young man from Tokyo went up to Earl with tears running down his face and embraced him. As he held on to Earl, his tears ran down the front of Earl's suit and dropped on the ground. If that isn't love, God never made a banjo. Some of the other great performers who made the day great for Doc were Mac Wiseman, Grandpa Jones, Marty Stuart, Jim Shumate and Ramona Jones.

LORRIE WORKING

Pretty **Lorrie Morgan** is recording and on the road. I'm betting on her being a huge star. She's grown up on the Opry and now she's married **Keith Whitley** whose career is taking off too—me, I'm expecting great things from this handsome couple.

WILLIE AND CONNIE HAVE SEPARATE MAINTENANCE AS THEY SAY IN HOLLYWOOD

Rumor has it, as they also say in Tinseltown, that **Willie Nelson** and his wife of 17 years, **Connie Nelson**, have called it quits recently. Connie hates Austin so she's moved to the West Coast with their younger daughter. Willie's constant companion is a **Miss DeAngelo**, who is a makeup artist he met on a movie set a while ago. I understand that the young lady is the same age as Willie's oldest daughter, **Lana Nelson**, whom I adore. Good luck, Willie. Good luck, Connie. Willie, keep them hits a-coming.

ANOTHER CARTER ON BOARD

Rosey Carter, daughter of **June Carter Cash** and June's second husband **Rip Nix**, signed a rock recording deal with the new indie label **Airborne**. Rosey's producer is **Mike Daniels**. I understand that Rosey has married **Mike Daniels** at the **Johnny Cash/June Carter** lakeside palatial mansion in Hendersonville, Tennessee. Our best to Rosie in her career and marriage.

24 HOURS OF STRAIT GEORGE

Now that my hero **George Strait** has a 52-minute home video, why I can have him in my bedroom every night singing for me like God always meant for him to do from the beginning. This project was filmed New Year's Eve at George's

GMM UPDATE: Connie Smith

Connie Smith is back. Twenty-four years after "Once a Day" became her first Number One hit, the first of many Top Ten successes, Connie left the business to raise her family. "A lot of people thought I quit country music to go into gospel, but I didn't," she says. "I *totally* quit. There just wasn't enough of me to go around with the babies very small, so I just quit, period"

She's found that starting a comeback can be anything but a breeze, even on the road. "It used to be if you had a record, you could work the road all you wanted to. Now if you don't have one on the charts, they don't want to book you. The few dates I do work, we have record crowds, good response and we get booked back. This year we have more bookings than ever; it's like a steady growing process"

Connie feels her onetime practice of including Christian testimony onstage (her husband's an ordained minister) may also have hurt bookings. "Promoters feel I'm gonna preach because I'm a born-again Christian. On my shows I *used* to give a testimony. I do at a gospel show or a church, but as far as my country shows go, I don't. But there's not been a way of them knowing that"

A veteran Grand Ole Opry member, she views changes in Opry audiences with mixed emotions. The reason for change? Non-country fans attending the shows. "Once in awhile we have a get-down, stompin' Opryland crowd. But so often now you go onstage and come off shakin' your head sayin, 'Why are they so asleep?' It used to be everyone came to see

the Opry stars. Now it's part of the Opryland group, and it's almost like a sideshow. People come in to see whether they like it or not. We're having to go out and sell ourselves for the first time to half the crowd, and it's divided"

New recordings are now the top priority in her comeback plan. "I think the only missing ingredient is a record on the charts." But, she adds, "I decided I won't record again until I can record the type of thing that is me." She's talking with a major label following a brief, disheartening stint with CBS.

CBS told her, "We need... a female Ricky Skaggs" "Which is what I am," she explains. "But before I got to record, something switched. They didn't want that. Then an executive said I was unsellable in today's market. His expertise was marketing. The two singles CBS released, they didn't do anything with" Music Row, she says, is "all marketing now. It used to be heads of the companies were creative people that worked their way up from guitar player or piano player."

Family life, however, still takes up much of Connie's time. She became a grandmother in early April, and with three kids at home and one in college, she admits, "I'm a very busy lady. I've got a trip comin' to Norway in July, where my grandbaby is, who I haven't seen. If it works out I'll be working with **Tommy Collins**. We've been tryin' to find time to write so I'm looking forward to doing some writing as well as performing"

—RICH KIENZLE

sold-out show in Dallas' Reunion Arena.

George sings 16 of his best. Producer of the project was manager **Erv Woolsey**. Associate producer **Danny O'Brian** is the in-house booking agent for George. Just so you know I dine with the finest and keep my p's and q's strait—I have been to lunch with **Misters Woolsey** and **O'Brian**. Talk about big-timing. Why, I dine with all the biggies.

THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW

SKB's (Schuyler, Knobloch and Bickhardt) first trip abroad takes them to Fuitigen Festival in Switzerland. The festival, geared toward songwriters, could not have three finer reps from the good old USA than the SKB trio. Them hillbillies can sing a mean tune, too.

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The Importance of Being Loretta

Welcome to Hurricane Mills, Loretta Lynn's mansion in Tennessee. Today the Queen Bee of song is opening her home to TV cameras, reporters, photographers and fans alike. It's to be a museum, and Loretta is the perfect curator. Within are many collections, souvenirs and family remembrances which have touched the star deeply. During the afternoon, we get to see two sides of Loretta—the woman behind the songs and the career woman who is back with a new album and a new road show.

It's a near perfect day in late spring, and all of Middle Tennessee is awash with the colors of the season. The dogwoods and crimson azaleas are in full bloom. The green pastures west of Nashville, along Interstate 40, where Black Angus cattle stand still as stones along meandering creek banks, are a bright crazy quilt of dandelions, buttercups and violets.

It's just a hop, skip and a jump further on down the interstate, just about 65 miles west of Nashville, to Loretta Lynn's 3500-acre dude ranch. And on this particular afternoon, it's not partic-

ularly hard to spot the Queen Bee herself.

Nope! There's ol' Loh-retty right there! She's out in the yard of Hurricane Mills, her exquisitely restored 14-room ante-bellum plantation mansion. She's in blue jeans and sneakers, and she's got on a pink sweat shirt that says (of course) "Loretta Lynn's Ranch."

On this particular hectic afternoon (not that they aren't all hectic where she lives), she is flouncing cheerfully around the yard, being trailed by a TV camera crew from *The Nashville Network*. Moving around the wide lawn,

by Bob Allen

which is splotted in afternoon sunlight and ornamented with giant ceramic lions, deer and other assorted larger-than-life animal statuary, she points out all the flower beds she's put in this spring. She pauses long enough to respond playfully to one of her employees who's been on her case about something: "Why don't you stick it..."

This day, it turns out, is a particularly special one in the world of Loretta Lynn—and hence, in the world of country music at large. That's why she's in off the road for a day or so. North Carolina, Southern Virginia, Indiana...nobody in her entourage can quite remember where they'd just come in from the night before, or where they'd be going the next morning. As Loretta later explains, it all looks the same from the back room of her bus with the shades pulled down. "Honey, this year I'm workin' harder than ever... over a hundred shows, and more comin'. And it ain't *my* fault!"

The occasion that takes her away from all her touring is Loretta's announcement that she is about to open the ground floor of Hurricane Mills, her home (or at least one of a half dozen or so

homes she and her husband Doolittle maintain in Nashville, Hawaii, Mexico, Caribou and elsewhere) to the public for tours. It seems that some time ago, after the death of her son Jack, Doo told her that due to bad memories and the lack of privacy, he was not going to spend another night in the house at Hurricane Mills. Loretta says she held out for a while, spending nights in a trailer she parked in the driveway. But then she too decided to move her permanent base to her Nashville home. Though she insists she *does* still reside at Hurricane Mills now and then, one gets the impression it's a lot less now than it is then.

In response to Loretta's decision, the country music industry's media machine has fallen into dutiful lockstep, treating the Queen Bee's new "open house" policy as if it were the biggest news since the Nicaraguan cease-fire. *The Nashville Network* camera crew has been at it since mid-morning, shooting yards of footage. From the looks of it, they're putting together sort of a slick little piece with a *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* feel to it. Loretta touring her grounds, Loretta descending the grand

staircase, Loretta greeting her fans, etc....one assumes the champagne music will be dubbed in later.

There are also a couple of other radio and print media reporters who've been in and out in the course of the day, "oohing" and "ahhing" deliciously over the crystal chandeliers and Loretta's extensive doll collection and asking the kinds of incisive questions for which they're famous. Things like, "You're wonderful, you're unique, you're fabulous, Loretta! How do you *do* it all!?"... "Do you *really* use Crisco?"

Then, of course, there's Yours Truly, in his worn corduroys and L.L. Bean moccasins, schlepping around the house with a camera and \$100 cassette recorder, capturing such "Loretta"-isms as: "I ain't got no hair on my legs now. It's hard to be hairy when you're an Indian!" And: "Please don't tell nobody I'm crazy!"

Yet there are other things going on in Loretta's life as well, which seem to make this an appropriate time to drop in for a visit. After a long time in limbo, she's at last making an attempt to bring her recording career out of suspended animation. She's got a new album, *Who Was That Stranger*, which is her first in several years. And, she adds, there's a new duet album with her long-time musical partner Conway Twitty in the works as well.

"I'd only had one album out in seven years before this one," she explains between camera shots and her elaborate personal histories and commentaries on nearly every item in her sitting room. "I've been doin' two shows a day, and still turnin' 'em away, so I figured why worry about it.

"And then, after I lost Jack, I got to where I just didn't want to do anything," she adds, referring wistfully to her 34-year-old son who died several years ago in a freak drowning accident near Hurricane Mills while crossing the rain-swollen Duck River on his horse. "You just feel like, *why?* Why do *anything?*"

"I'm kinda glad anyhow," she suddenly brightens up again and points up at the wall over the grand staircase which is literally wallpapered with covers of the many, many albums she's recorded since her very first in 1961. "I got eighty-some albums out already. I kinda figured that that was enough for a while!"

"That there one's my favorite," she points enthusiastically at one particular cover photo from quite a few moons ago which features a decidedly younger Loretta Lynn with a stern cast to her eyes. "It shows my meanness....And see those ones there?" She points at three of her early MGM releases. "All three of them covers was taken on the same day. That's how cheap they was back then!"



Megan, Loretta's granddaughter, shared the excitement of Hurricane Mills.

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2559 "May Christmas bring Friends to your Fireside Peace to your Pathway, and Good Health throughout the New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



1304 LEGENDARY IRISH GREETING "May the trail rise up to meet you, may the wind be always at your back, may the sun shine warm upon your face, the snow fall soft on the plains around you and until we meet again... may God hold you in the hollow of His hand." —artist Gordon Snidow



1269 "In every home, in every heart, the lights of friendship glow... it's time to greet the friends it's nice to know." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist K. Eberts



1140 "The wonder of Christmas fills the night" May Christmas bring Friends... Peace to your Pathway and Good Health throughout the New Year" —artist Bill Shaddix



3261 "May Christmas bring to you the music of laughter... the warmth of friendship and the spirit of love" —artist Richard Barth



2480 "Lord, give us eyes that look for Your everlasting light... hearts that are willing to give as well as to receive... May your Christmas be filled with His Love." —artist T. Blaylock



1822 "Christmas Greetings" (from Charlie Russell's personal Christmas card for 1915) "Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist Charles M. Russell



1462 "Peace on Earth" "May Peace be your Gift at Christmas and your Treasure through all the Year" —artist Brummett Echohawk



2534 "The very finest Christmas gifts are not found below the tree..." "May God's peace touch your heart... and warm your Christmas celebration!" —artist R. Wagoner



2540 "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills..." Psalm 121:1 "May you have the Spirit of Christmas... Gladness of Christmas... Heart of Christmas which is Love" —artist R. Moreton



2388 "In every home, in every heart, the lights of friendship glow... time to greet the friends it's nice to know..." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



2417 "May Christmas bring Friends to your Fireside, Peace to your Pathway and Good Health throughout the New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



2409 "From the two of us at Christmas" "To you and all whom you hold dear, a Joyous Christmas and Happy New Year" —artist Robert H. Blair



2507 "May the Great Spirit bless you, your lodge, and those you love with peace and lasting happiness. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" —artist Ted Blaylock



1883 "When pine trees bend with heavy snow and trails are hard to find... brings memories to mind..." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" —artist Kathryn Williams B.

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World Radio History

Take One. The *TNN* camera crew is all set up now for a Scarlet O'Hara-style grand entrance shot of Queen Bee Loretta coming up the steps of her porticoed front porch and walking through her big front door. The cameras roll, and here comes Loretta with a big smile on her face. Only instead of turning left and going in the sitting room like they wanted her to, she swerves right, and the camera loses her.

"Loretta," the director/host says shyly, "we wanted you to go *that way*."

"Bull...shoot!" The Star shouts and petulantly stomps her foot, more in jest than in anger. "You never told me *where* to go!"

"Can we try it again?" says the director uneasily.

"Okay, but you *gotta* tell me *where* to go," she laughs and gives them a good-natured scolding. "And you better get it right this time!"

As Loretta, with her small entourage of visitors and employees in tow, proceeds with the grand tour of the first floor, one is struck by the vast collection of stuff she's pulled together here. Priceless antiques are stuffed into glass cases and cabinets, on display right next to the kind of made-in-Taiwan doodads you get at roadside souvenir stands for \$1.99. There's Indian art, precious china, 150-year-old Bavarian cuckoo clocks, Avon plates, dolls and knicknacks and bric-a-brac of every size, shape, description and price range. There's Doo's gun collection, there's some furniture and clothes used in the movie *Coal Miner's Daughter*, and there are fancy lace curtains Loretta says she made herself. There's pictures of her children and grandchildren. There's a headless mannequin. ("I'll put a head on her someday," Loretta blithely responds to the obvious question.) There's an antique milk churn that once belonged to her mother, the lid of which one of her granddaughters accidentally stuffed in the garbage compactor. In the kitchen there is a wall-full of elaborate wood etching designs. "Doo drew a dirty one," she points to one vaguely suggestive little wood-burnt curly-cue. "And I had to do something with it to clean it up, as you can see."

Then there's the downstairs bathroom, of which she is particularly proud. It's bigger, more lavishly decorated and luxuriously furnished than a lot of people's club cellars. "I chose them colors myself," she prattles with light-hearted self-satisfaction as she points out the room's recurring green and blue motif. "You know that's the same colors as my house in Hawaii! I'm gonna make my bathroom in Hawaii green and blue, too. I love green and blue—it's brown and gold right now.... That is, the bath-



Loretta's home is filled with precious antiques and memories. Her grandparents' picture is just one of a number of family treasures. The mother of six and grandmother of 11 now has more time to spend with them than ever. But her career is still important. She says this year she's working over a hundred shows.



room in Hawaii. Then I got one blue and blue bathroom, and the one in Nashville is pink and green...."

And so on.

At this point Loretta marches over and opens up a wood and glass cabinet to afford the TV people a closer inspection of one of her artifacts. In the process, though, she accidentally trips a burglar alarm. It fills the house with an awful buzzing, sets the dogs howling and frightens Loretta herself so bad that she hollers and looks like her hair is about to stand on end.

Okay now, it's Take Two, folks! The *TNN* crew wants a little live-action footage of Loretta hobnobbing and inter-relating with "the public." Fortunately the ranch has already opened for the season. An estimated 400,000 paying visitors a year troop through to tour the house, Loretta's museum, the recreated western town and the new coal mine—an exact replica of the one Loretta's father

worked in—that is presently being built in the side of a nearby hill. They'll also partake of the camping, horse-riding, live music shows, motorcycle races and other on-going events held each summer on the huge ranch. So fortunately, there's a sizable flock of Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Publics already peering over the fence into her front yard with their cameras. They are naturally beside themselves with excitement over an impromptu visit from the Queen Bee herself, who comes strolling down the walk with her two-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter Megan in tow and a big smile on her face.

In this setting Loretta really comes alive and reveals herself as the master politician that she is at heart. As she leans over the chest-high gate and clowns, jests, banters and jokes with the visitors, it's clear that she's enjoying this visit as much as anyone. Her spirits lift perceptibly, and she's all smiles and laughter as she signs autographs, poses for pictures with Megan and kisses



babies that are handed up to her. With her typical good-natured dizziness and aplomb, she answers even the most off-the-wall questions that are put to her. "Those TV people are tapin' this now," she playfully warns the guests. "So if there's anybody out with another man's wife, ya better run!"

Looking closely at Loretta's distinctive and famous facial features as they are etched in the sunlight, one cannot help but be a bit awe-struck as to how remarkably well this 52-year-old mother of six and grandmother of 11 appears to be holding up. Especially when you consider that through the years, she's been haunted by a whole catalogue of bizarre ailments, including migraines, high blood pressure, hypoglycemia, depression, ulcers, a former "nerve pill" dependency, and an unexplained series of seizures and black-outs. In fact, on a good day—like this one seems to be—she could probably pass for being ten years younger than she really is—the subtle crow's feet lines around her eyes and mouth notwithstanding. "Uhm, wait a minute, I gotta think? Fifty-one? Fifty-two?...," she responds hesitantly when a man in the crowd asks her age. "Ya know, half the time I can't even remember it. That's the truth!"

Take Three. The TV crew, after about eight or nine hours of generally driving everyone crazy, finally packs it in. Loretta is sitting at the kitchen table. It's the first time in hours that she's been off her feet. But she's still going 60 miles an hour, trying to do an interview while dabbling in a half a dozen other little projects and talking to a half a dozen

other people at the same time. Lurking nearby is Ken Riley, Loretta's long-time road manager. He is a handsome man who wears a look of chronic, disgruntled impatience which, one assumes, comes with the territory—that, plus a dozen years or so of trying to bestow some sense of order on the benevolent chaos that seems to be the ruling force in his boss' life and career. "You 'bout done?" he asks me roughly ten minutes after I've sat down to start my interview, and roughly two and a half hours after it was supposed to have started.

Loretta, meanwhile, is polishing up an old antique picture frame that contains an ancient, yellowed photo of her maternal grandparents. Then, out of the blue, she is suddenly rattling on about this weird addiction of hers... buying shoes:

"You know, when I was young, I never had shoes. I never had nothin'. This has to be it, because now I got shoes with the tags still on 'em, that I can't even wear. But I cannot *pass* shoes in a store window! If I pass a store with shoes, I'm gonna go in and buy five or six *pair*, whether I ever wear 'em or not. And I don't buy just one pair. Sometimes I buy four or five. Not real expensive ones, but forty, fifty, maybe a hundred dollars each. It's awful! I got shoes I don't... Now what's wrong with me?" she whines, as if really expecting someone to analyze her Imelda Marcos-style shoe-shopping compulsiveness for her. "I'll put 'em on and I'll just *wear* 'em a little bit, so I can give 'em away for charity or somethin'. But I *can't* stop."

Now that Loretta has sat still long enough to make herself a stationary target, she is besieged by a seemingly

endless stream of granddaughters, nephews, uncles, nieces and in-laws, all of whom seem to be employed by her in one way or another, and all of whom seem to have either a complaint or a money problem. "Loh-retta, come look what they done to that tractor!" "Loh-retty, you sent them girls out with the money to bring back sausage and biscuits two hours ago. What happened to 'em?" "Grandma, I wanna have my wedding in the *big* church, but I can't afford it...." It is obvious that the whole set-up here at the ranch, which employs 35 people or so, is as matriarchal as a beehive. And ol' Lohretty is both the queen bee and the chief cook on the gravy train.

"There have been times in my life when I felt like I was nothin' but a tree people thought they could pick money off of," she sighs wearily. "There've been times when I felt like I was worth more dead than alive.

"Every day on the road I hear these sob stories: 'I got ten kids, my husband's just died, we don't have nothin' to eat...' Well, it used to be I'd shell out five hundred, a thousand dollars, whatever I had on me, to these people. This went on for years, until I started checkin' with the police. Then I found out some of 'em had more money than I did!

"Sometimes," she sighs again, "it's like you're a big pie settin' there on the table, and everybody runs up and gets their piece of you, and when it's over, the plate's empty. I think that's one reason why Doo got so he didn't wanna live down here no more. He'd get up at four in the mornin', and by five, there'd already be people here, wantin' somethin'. And it's almost the same way with me."

As the afternoon wears on, Loretta's off and running. First she recalls an experience from many years ago, when she was a small child sharing a bed with her aunt and uncle on their wedding night. "It was one of them old bed ticks made of corn shucks, and if they made any noise, I never did hear it. But I know they musta moved sometime; they ended up with six kids!" Then all of a sudden, she's describing her adventures at an awards banquet just a year or so ago. "Here I am settin' there with this big old gold medal hung around my neck, next to this mad scientist from Johnson & Johnson and this other feller who split the atom. They spent ten minutes tellin' all the things I'd done in my life, and half of 'em, I swear I couldn't even remember doin' my own self..." She rattles on and on about her recipes, her art work, and any number of other topics near and dear to her life, including religion:

"When I travel, I just mostly stay in

Tanya Tucker



STRONG ENOUGH TO BEND

THE HOTTEST GIRL IN THE COUNTRY
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the bus and keep the blinds pulled and don't see anything. I study the Bible, and ancient history. I never did read that good in my life, but I can study the Bible better than anything there is. And listen to this, this is *weird!*" Her voice suddenly gets low and mysterious: "I started readin' Revelations, right? I got right up to the sixth seal, where John's puttin' one foot on water and one foot on land... the seventh seal... I think I know what it is now... I tell ya, I think the earth's a lot older than Adam and Eve. It's just that that was the first time people was smart enough to start keepin' time..."

Related to this topic is the terrible loss of her son Jack, which occurred on a day when Loretta was in the intensive care unit of an Illinois hospital being treated for exhaustion and nervous seizures while on tour:

"I tell ya, I miss him more all the time. I read the Bible all the time, and if it wasn't for that I'd probably be in the nut house. It gets harder all the time. I really think that's one of the things that bothers Doo about livin' down here. But he's gotta understand: when it's time, it's time.

"You know," she adds an intense, haunted look in her eyes, "I knew Jack was gonna die. I'd known it for a long time. I walked in that door there one day," she points across the room, "and I had this picture of him in a picture frame, hangin' up over there. It was summertime. And I walked in the door, and got about over to the fireplace there, and that picture just fell off the wall. It cracked. It cracked right across the middle! I looked at everybody and said, 'Seven years, and Jack'll die! Well,

seven years, and Jack *died*. That's no lie. I knew I'd lose him. I knew it.

"Your kids don't belong to you," she adds sadly. "They're only loaned to you!"

Then there's her former dependency on prescription drugs: "The first time I ever took Librium was when I got sued and hit the witness stand," she explains, making reference to a \$5 million breach-of-contract suit that was brought against her by her former booking agent and music publisher some years back. "I was trying to heal my mind. It got where if I started crying, I'd take one of them pills. Later it got to where I'd take two and still be shaking. Finally it just got so bad that I'd just get up and do my show and say, 'Hey, I don't wanna think about nothing!' And I'd just take some more Librium and go to sleep.

"There was some of 'em that had me takin' Valium," she snaps indignantly. "Well, they'll say anything they want to, but I never did. They'd of drove me out of my mind! I took one once and went nuttier than a fruitcake! I was talking and saying things and I didn't even know what I was doing!"

Her thoughts shift to her sister, Crystal Gayle: "I don't get to see her as much as I'd like to, but we're gonna work Lake Tahoe together in September, and we're gonna tear the place up!" she says proudly. "She called me the other day and said, 'Come over, I'm about to have a nervous break-down!' You know, she's not real strong when it comes to things like that. So I went over, and she was just havin' pictures taken of her two kids. I just said, 'Crystal Gayle, get a-holt of yourself!' She's a vegetarian, see. She just started that. I told her, 'You need to gain five pounds.'"

She said, 'Oh no, I need to *lose* five pounds! I can't even get into the dresses I used to wear!' I said, 'Oh no, honey, you ain't fat. You're thin. You've just shifted around a little havin' them babies, is all!'"

Then she's off on her brand-new album: "Ain't no synthesizers on it, ain't no harmony singers—I did all the harmonies myself," she explains with obvious pride. "I started out all the songs like I wanted to, and ended 'em like I wanted to. Made my own changes. Jimmy Bowen stayed out of the studio most of the time that I was singin'. I guess he didn't wanta make me nervous. I added some little sayin' or somethin' of my own to every song." She smiles and breaks into an impromptu rendition of "Who Was That Stranger," the album's title song.

The topic leads naturally to Conway Twitty: "Conway, he lives and breathes music. I'm not like that. I mean, I was twenty-seven years old, I had four kids in school, when I started singin'. So it never hit me like it does some people. And, as you can see..." she gestures with her hand and sweeps the room with her eyes. "I like to do other things."

And perhaps when it's all said and done, what is really so amazing about Loretta Lynn is that despite more than 25 years in the recording business, two-and-a-half decades of triumphs as country music's most awarded woman artist and twenty-five years worth of troubling personal losses, trials and disappointments, she is still as real and unaffected as they come. She's still got that backwoods Kentucky accent, thick as corn syrup. And she still has that uncanny ability to open herself up to a perfect stranger, as if she's known him or her her whole life. She's had movies and books made on her life. She's been honored at Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., for her long and distinguished career, and at national achievement award dinners along with nuclear scientists and famous medical researchers. She's won every music award in her field there is to win. Yet, when she has a rare day at home off the road, you're just as likely as not to find her down on her knees out in the yard, planting chrysanthemums or digging for arrowheads, or dusting off her heirlooms and souvenirs in the parlor.

"Who's a star!?" she bellows with comic indignation when the interview comes to a close and someone reminds her, in parting, of her glorious and uneclipsed status in the hierarchy of country music's recent history. "I'm not some star hanging up there, shining," she laughs and points toward the ceiling. "No, sir! I'm just right down here, just a-grindin' away with the rest of 'em." ■

CMSA NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1988—HELEN BARNARD, EDITOR

Newsletter

REVIEWS & FEATURES

Golden Autumn

After a hot summer, it's good to bask in the golden days of autumn. New starts—children return to school—and time to look back. For some, the harvest's already in. It's made of memories. It's made of the satisfaction of knowing that you've been part of something living, of something on-going, of something good.

The traditions and heritage of country music are a precious harvest for its fans, many of whom worked to make it what it is today. As musicians, as radio announcers, as sales people, as acquaintances and companions to stars, country music's "little people" and local giants are part of the fabric as surely as are the big names.

The *Newsletter* is especially devoted to the connections between people as fans-and-fans and as fans-and-stars working together. It

is devoted to keeping the flavor of the past alive so that young people, a large and growing part of the audience, can hear about experiences like member John Jehoich's.

The *Newsletter* Legends series features Roy Rogers this issue—someone who made a big kid of a lot of us during the 1940's and 1950's. And while Roy Rogers makes us feel young, performers like Ralph Stanley and Bill Monroe, still going strong, show us the beauty of old age. Golden autumn.

The CMSA was born five years ago this month, in September 1983. As a society, it has helped connect people of like interests from coast to coast and across the sea. Thanks to all who participate for keeping us in touch with each other.

The mailbag was full of Collections items again this month.



From John Jehoich's family album: left, neighbors going to town in the very early days behind a team of oxen. This was before John's time. Right, threshing and spud-picking time in North Dakota in 1938. John took this one himself.



Back In the Good Old Days

John Jehoich remembers what it was like when people played music for each other without much training and when the barn dance was really in the barn. This story is also dedicated to all the hot and dry farmers who had to put up with so much this year.

Back in the good old days, a musician was usually someone who had no training in music but liked it enough to learn as best they could on their own. Then when they thought they were good enough, they'd go play for dances and houseparties, etc.

I started to play the harmonica at about six or seven years old. Then later on I bought a button accordion, three rows of buttons on the keyboard and forty-eight bass. That was a very nice instrument, a Honer, of course! We were a poor family

and lived on a farm twenty miles from town, so music lessons were out... You either learned by yourself or you didn't learn at all.

This was back during the big Depression days and money was scarcer than hens' teeth. So in the summer I would go out to North Dakota to take in the harvest and threshing. That way we had money to see us through the winter. We made the big sum of three dollars a day and room and board working in the harvest fields, so we felt

pretty good about that. It was better than the ten dollars a month back home.

The day started at five in the morning when we'd get up and go feed the horses, then go bring the cattle to milk. Next we curried down the horses and cleaned the barn. Then we had breakfast, after which we harnessed up the horses and hitched them up and went out to the fields to cut hay or grain or whatever until noon. We took an hour so the horses could eat and rest a little, then back to the field again till six o'clock, then in to supper and all the milking and chores all over again. That ended about eight o'clock. Then if it was Saturday night, we'd hitch up the team to the wagon and go pick up the neighbors and go to the barn dance.

The barn was a big one, about a hundred

In This Issue

- Harvest of Music Memories
- Readers Create Reappears
- Roy Rogers Rides Again
- Collections Overflows

feet long and forty-five wide. There were two rows of cattle stalls facing each other. As you entered the door in the middle of the barn, you turned right and went along behind the cattle stalls to the end where the stairway went to the dance floor above. The cattle stalls on that side were always clean and new straw put down there so it didn't look so much like a barn. Where the door was you could cross over to the other side between the cattle. That side usually wasn't too clean. Halfway between the door and the stairway was a lantern hanging that cast shadows all over the barn.

Beer didn't come in cans and bottles then, it came in kegs and barrels. Everyone kicked in some money to pay for it and no one paid by the glass. You paid your part,

then drank all you wanted all night.

We'd get there and I'd go to the bandstand, which was really a nice big stage. Then along would come another fellow who wanted to play and then another until maybe four or five showed up. We never knew who would be there to play. Practice was out, so you just got together and tried to harmonize. Sometimes it didn't go too good, I'll tell you, but we did get started, and soon everyone was feeling good so they didn't notice how bad we really were.

Every once in a while, some couple would leave the floor and go downstairs. Later they'd come back and slip in so no one would notice they were missing and start dancing. When we'd stop between songs, someone would brush the straw off their

backs and ask how that happened to be there...

After the dance we'd hitch up the team and go home. By that time it was daylight. We changed our clothes and went back to the day's work all over again. Sunday, you say, so you rest...but it wasn't that way during harvest time. The farmer and his family took time to go to church, but the hired help went back to the fields. From Saturday morning at five o'clock till Sunday evening about eight, you went steady. The dance tickets were 25¢ each, and we usually earned about three or four dollars playing all night. How many entertainers nowadays like music enough to do that?

**John Jehoich
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

More Favorite Radio Stations

Readers continue to write in with news of stations they like.

- **KRTZ 99FM**, Cortez, Colorado. Helen Curley and friends of Shiprock, New Mexico, wrote in about this 24-hour station in the Four Corners area. "Many night people rely on this station when every other station filters out. It has saved a lot of lonely drivers, especially in remote areas of the land-truck drivers, nightshift workers, tourists, etc." KRTZ's program director describes its format as "progressive—from traditional to New Age country music instrumental. We're a friendly, personality radio station." For more on KRTZ, stay tuned.

- **KUPL Radio**, Portland, Oregon. Carmie

Wolff writes, "I have found a new magazine, a new radio station and a new way of life, and I love all three. Only wish I had met all three much sooner." KUPL is a Top 40 country station.

- **WHWK 98FM**, Binghamton, New York. Lisa Hansberg, of Newark Valley, New York, subscribed to *Country Music* after hearing about it on the air from D.J. Mike Jeffries. Mike says WHWK is a contemporary country station, featuring the syndicated show *Solid Gold Country*. His favorite show on the station, however, is *Yesteryear Today*, a half-hour program of country music from the 1930's to the 1960's, hosted by John Davidson on Sunday nights.

—A.B.

More About Sonny Boy Loden

Thanks to Truman McKibben for this information.

I wish to make a small correction on the picture of Sonny Boy Loden and the Loden Family in the January/February *Newsletter*. The girl on Sonny's left with the bass violin is not his sister. Her name is Ruby Palmer. I was acquainted with her when they were playing at Jackson, Mississippi, and I was stationed at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, in the years 1943-44.

**Truman W. McKibben
Hobbs, New Mexico**



Bluegrass Greats

Denise Farrell of Norfolk, Virginia, caught Ralph Stanley and Bill Monroe at a bluegrass festival in Virginia Beach on May 14. Denise is an active fan and writes for various publications. We've published pictures of hers before.

July 1988 Poll Album and Single of the Month

Ricky Van Shelton	<i>Wild-Eyed Dream</i>
Randy Travis	"I Told You So"

Ricky Van Shelton steals the prize this month, Number One in albums, displacing Randy Travis. George Strait is Number Two with his new one, *If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Livin'*, and Randy is hanging on in third with *Always & Forever*. Votes for these top albums are closely grouped.

Singles winner is Randy Travis (it was Ricky Van Shelton last month). Second place winner is Kathy Mattea with a song with a long name, "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses." Vern Gosdin is third with "Set 'Em Up, Joe."

Don't forget to vote in the September Poll on the For Members Only page.

Readers Create



Suzanne M. Day, a professional illustrator from Southbury, Connecticut, used her painting of Kenny Rogers on her promotional flyer. But she has not sent any of them to potential clients yet—instead, she keeps giving them away to Rogers fans.

Just for Fun

Jamie Russell Winters, of Jackson, Mississippi, wrote this short story for Country Music and Newsletter readers.

A Young Man Visits Nashville

After gassing up his Tennessee Ernie Ford at the Roy Clark station, the Faron Young man left Alabama setting off for Nashville to make his fame and fortune. He took a lot of Charley Pride in his old Ernie Ford although he had one badly dented Freddy Fender.

Upon his arrival he was in awe of the fresh Hank Snow on the ground, set off by the Buddy Holly in the window. He also noticed June Carter for President banners everywhere. He knew she'd back out of this race because she wouldn't work for peanuts or a Johnny Paycheck. She strictly dealt with Johnny Cash.

Hungry, he went into a restaurant and ordered a bowl of Archie Campbell soup and a bottle of Billy Walker. This really hit the spot and the Ray Price was right.

Contented, he decided to go to the recording studio. Aimlessly walking, (for what seemed like hours), he found the room in which Conway Twitty was recording. He knew another hit was in progress. For many people considered Mr. Twitty the Jimmy Dean of country music.

When the session had ended he walked down the Tom T. Hall to the gift shop. There he purchased a Minnie Pearl for his momma. Small, loud, but worth much more than face value.

All this walking had made him look and feel Merle Haggard so he headed for a hotel to get some rest. Reaching Main Street, he ran smack into the middle of a feud between The Statler Brothers and The Oak Ridge Boys. They demolished his old Ernie Ford. All four tires were Lester Flatt and you couldn't even tell there was once a lone dented Freddy Fender. Furious, he looked to the corner office of Rodgers, Rogers and Rogers (Jimmie, Roy & Kenny, of course) Attorneys at Law, but decided against it. He figured that Judge George Hay wouldn't give him a fair shake anyway, him being a stranger.

He knew now it was time to leave. Jumping a Boxcar Willie, he yelled out, "Good riddance, Nashville, Mel til-til-til Tillis I return." All he could think of was getting

home and jumping into a hot Ernest Tubb.

Once home his momma (in her Ferlin Husky voice) started giving him the Jimmy Dickens. As she gave him a Roy Acuff upside the head, she said, "Son, stay home

and make your fortune. You may or may not become Charlie Rich and famous, but you'll never compete with the George and Grandpa Joneses."

—**Jamie Russell Winters**



Art Imitates Photography

Lloyd West of Tucson, Arizona, painted this picture of Willie Nelson from a photo in *Country Music*. He is an admirer of the photography in the magazine and wanted to share his pictures with us and our readers.

"If You Want It Done Right..."

Bev Writes Her Own Real Country Music

Bev King, of Madill, Oklahoma, dobro artist and the author of *Real Country Music: Finding It, Preserving It*, a guide to traditional country radio stations featured in the

January/February 1988 Newsletter, wrote this song about traditional country music. Bev's single went out to traditional stations in early June. Anyone heard it?

Come On Home, Country Boy

Come on Home, Country Boy,

Remember the songs of Hank and Roy,
Sing us Eddy's lonesome Cattle Call.
Take us for a carefree ride,

Across the southern countryside, on the
Golden Rocket or the Wabash Cannonball.

Why is it all the songs you sing

Tell shameful tales of city things?
Hotels and bars and stolen love at midnight.
Your Wildwood Flower waits for you,
With a heart as pure as morning dew,
As she walks the hills alone out in the
moonlight.

Art Imitates Waylon

Been one of Waylon's biggest fans for years. I've never tried having my sketches printed in your magazine. I treasure all his albums, tapes, pictures, etc.

I've loved art work for over twenty years. Forty percent of what I've done has been freehand sketches of Mr. Jennings.

I'm really proud of my latest, Waylon on the Road. Thanks for the support of my friends Bob Bailey on photography and Don Sexton with copyright material.

This would mean so much to me being printed in your magazine. Hey, maybe someday I can give Waylon the original. Whatcha think, Hoss?

Dave Adkins
Xenia, Ohio



Nuts About Dolly

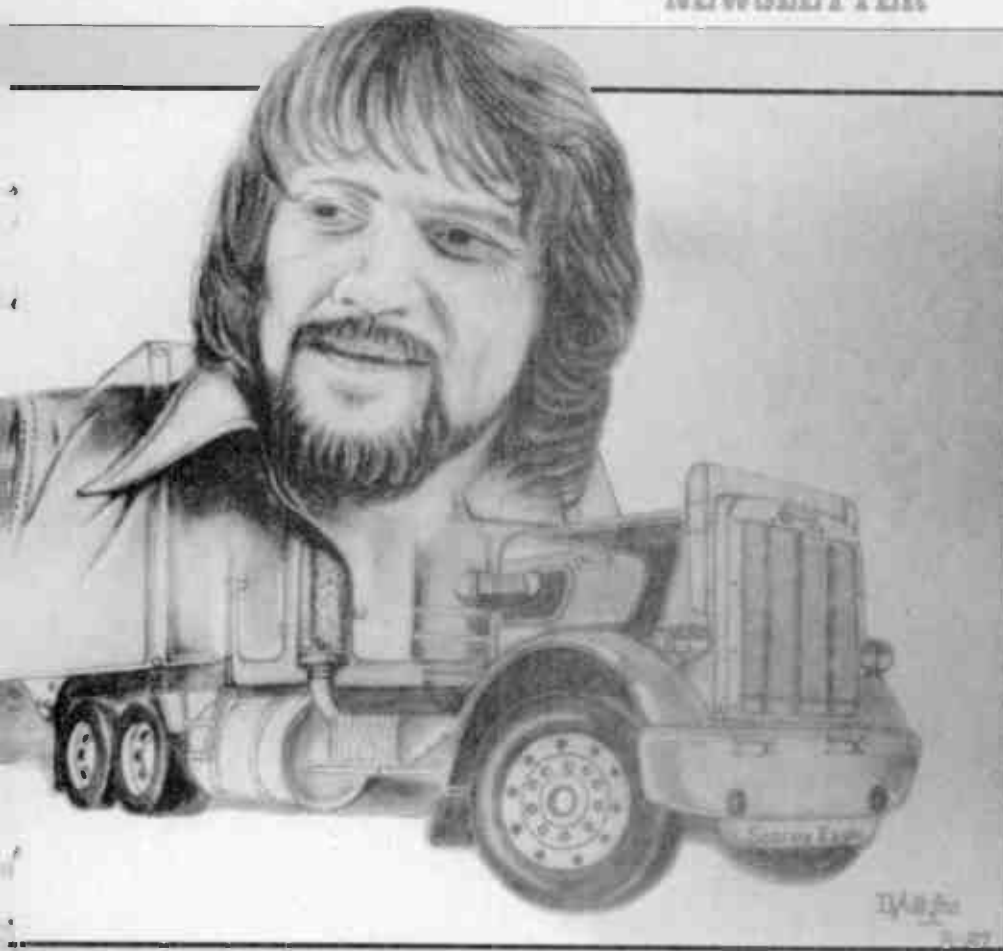
J. "T-bird" Taylor of Bellflower, California, thought he was nuts when he first wrote this song about Dolly Parton. Then he saw the November/December 1987 issue of *Country*

**God Broke the Mold
When He Made Dolly**

Many fine things come in numbers of one,
it's true,
Like Jerry Lee & Elvis 'n' Jesus, just to
name a few,
And there's a lot of fine women in the world
make my heart go golly,
But I'm a-tellin' ya, God broke the mold
when he made Dolly.

Five feet tall, got a smile homemade,
Feet so small cuz they grow'd in the shade,
Best dang pair in the whole damn valley
(feet, that is),
Yea, God broke the mold when he made
Dolly.

Sing about an old freight train,
Or Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain,
Tell us about your Blue Ridge Mountain Home.
Sing praises to the One above,
Or tell us of a mother's love,
Or sing about the places where you've
roamed.



Dear Dwight...

Toni K. Staton, of Newark, Texas, wrote this letter to Dwight Yoakam, using the names of songs from Dwight's two albums, Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc. and Hillbilly Deluxe. Choose from the song titles below to fill in the blanks. Help Toni reach Dwight in style.

- Little Ways
- Guitars, Cadillacs
- Bury Me
- This Drinkin' Will Kill Me
- Please, Please, Baby
- 1000 Miles
- It Won't Hurt
- Honky Tonk Man
- Johnson's Love
- Always Late With Your Kisses
- I'll Be Gone
- Little Sister
- Throughout All Time
- Twenty Years
- Smoke Along the Track

Dear Dwight:

I've got to be your biggest fan! I would drive _____ just to see you dance. You've got those _____ that would make any girl crazy. It seems like I've been waiting _____ to meet you. I come to see you every time you're here and sometimes in Dallas. I know you're busy being a _____, and you are only interested in _____, and hillbilly music, but _____ for you to make time to meet me just this once, will it? If I don't get to meet you soon, they might as well _____ . You'd better hurry because _____ or _____, whichever comes first. My _____ says I'm crazy and that you will leave me in the _____, but _____ I just want to meet you. I know our friendship could be as strong as _____ and it would last _____ ! Oh, Dwight, are you _____?

—Toni Staton

Proud Uncle and George Jones Fan

Liking George Jones runs in the family. Enclosed is a photo of my idol, George Jones, in a painting done by my favorite niece, Julie Zavala. The painting is done on a walnut-type wood paneling which I have suitably framed in my music room, which contains approximately ten thousand country music songs.

Julie has been so special to me for many, many years. It would be a personal favor to me and an honor to my niece if you would publish this picture.

Wayne L. Guidry
Arlington, Texas

Music and realized how many other people have written about her. He hopes Dolly and her fans will like his song. "If you could only hear the melody," he says.

Born and raised in her Tennessee mountain home,
Turned eighteen, hit the road and started to roam,
Took a job working "9 to 5" way out in Holly (wood),
Now she's singin' on the tube every Sunday on a show called Dolly.

Sings like a bird, got a heart made of gold,
Temper like a tiger when her blood runs cold,
Had more leading men than Good Golly, Miss Molly,
And I'm a-tellin' ya, God broke the mold when he made Dolly.

—J. "T-bird" Taylor

I know the styles and times have changed,
But country folks are still the same,
The songs you sing are tearing us apart.
We haven't all moved into town,
We haven't let our standards down,
So sing a song to touch our country hearts.

—Bev King



George Jones by Julie Zavala.

The myths created in Hollywood occasionally take funny turns, exposing, even developing one side of a personality (real or invented) while ignoring others. Roy Rogers is a perfect example: the genial, big-brotherly character many of us grew up with is virtually all the public remembers, Roy's gifts as a singer, yodeler, songwriter, bandleader and musician overwhelmed by the force of his benign image as the King of the Cowboys.

As fans and non-fans alike know by now, Roy was born Leonard Franklin Slye in Cincinnati, Ohio, where second base at Riverfront Stadium now rests, so the legend goes, on November 5, 1911. His family moved to Portsmouth and then to Duck Run on the Ohio River, where he learned to sing, to play the guitar, to yodel and to ride.

California's employment opportunities during the Depression rather than its reputation as a center for its film or music lured the Slye family there in 1930, but by the following year Len had landed a spot on the radio as a vocalist and guitarist for the Rocky Mountaineers. There he met a young Canadian-born singer and songwriter named Bob Nolan, one of the great composers of our time. It took several tries, but eventually he sweet-talked Nolan and another aspiring singer/songwriter named Tim Spencer into forming a Western trio, featuring trio yodeling. At first they called themselves The Pioneer Trio, but their name was amended by a radio announcer who introduced them as The Sons of the Pioneers because of their youth. After a shaky start, these three young men, soon joined by Hugh and Karl Farr, became extremely popular on stage and in films. They began recording for Decca in 1935 and for the American Record Company (later called Columbia) in 1937.

When Gene Autry sat out on strike at Republic Pictures in 1937, the studio which had created the entire singing cowboy type found itself with an opening, and Len Slye jumped at the chance. He auditioned, was hired, and signed a contract with Republic on October 13. He appeared in a couple of

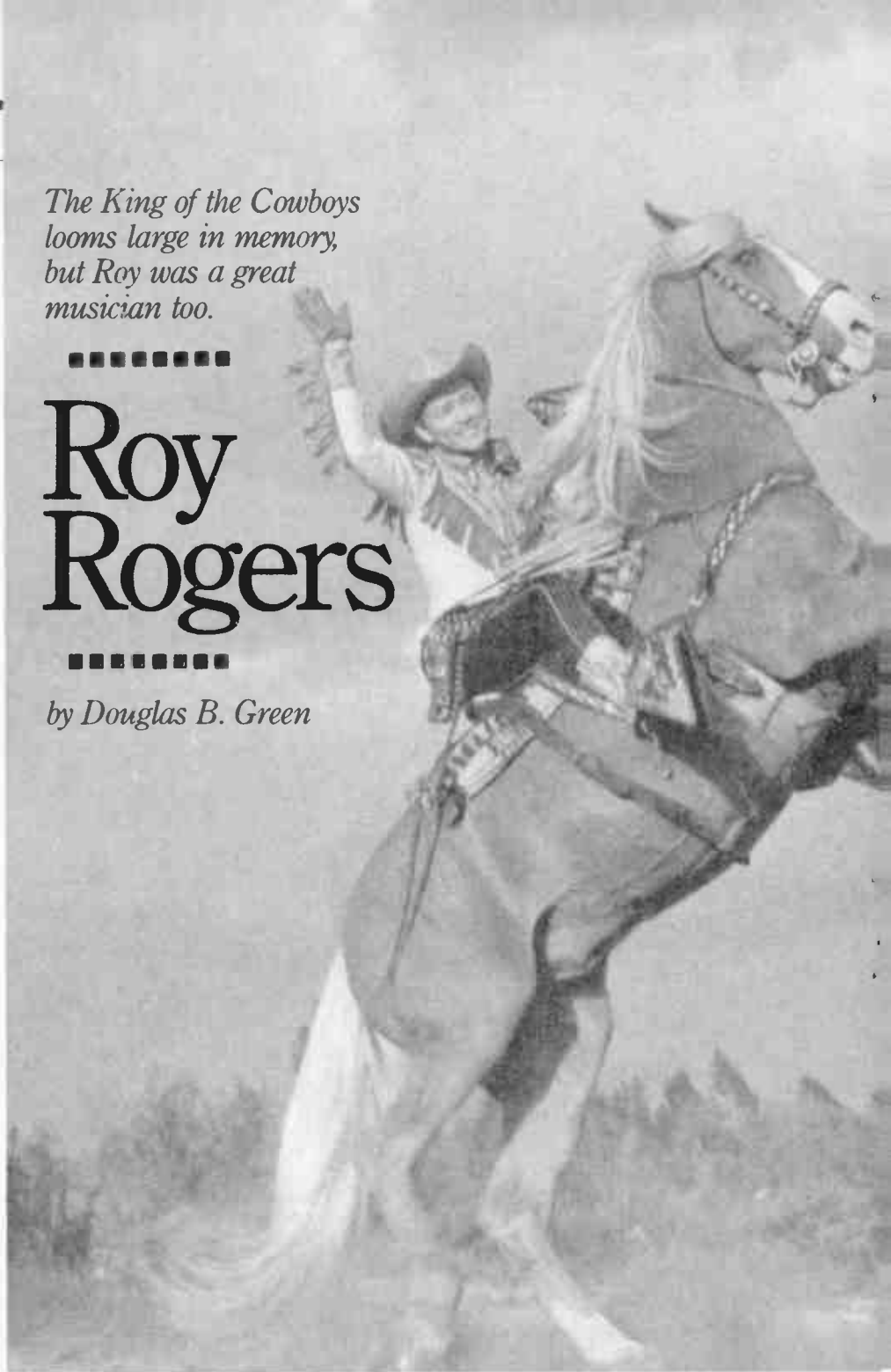
The King of the Cowboys looms large in memory, but Roy was a great musician too.

.....

Roy Rogers

.....

by Douglas B. Green



support roles billed as Dick Weston before starring as Roy Rogers in *Under Western Stars* in 1938. It took a few pictures for Roy Rogers to establish the genial, thoroughly likeable character he made famous. His films were helped enormously by the addition of the superb George "Gabby" Hayes in 1939 and his old saddle pals, *The Sons of the Pioneers*, in 1941.

Following Gene Autry's departure for the service in World War II, Republic put their full promotion push behind Rogers, now billed as The King of the Cowboys. His films became increasingly extravagant in costume and choreography, a reflection of the profound impression the musical *Oklahoma* had had on Republic's chief executive, Herbert Yates. Rogers' films of this era were the most lavish singing cowboy films ever made, a trend which continued for several years until the industry returned to more action-oriented formats in the late 1940's.

Rogers' career with Republic Pictures wound to a close in 1951 with *Pals of the Golden West*. When he and Yates could not agree on a contract, he simply moved to television, returning to the silver screen for a couple of guest shots in the 1950's and a starring role in the unpretentious *MacKintosh and T.J.* in 1975.

Over one hundred episodes of *The Roy Rogers Show* were filmed for TV from 1951 through 1957. From then on Roy and Dale Evans concentrated on personal appearances. They moved to Apple Valley, California, in the high desert, in 1964, and opened a Roy Rogers Museum, which they moved down the road to Victorville in 1976. In 1987 they returned to TV to host *Happy Trails Theater* on *The Nashville Network*. To this day Roy retains his athletic and healthy looks, seeming, as always, at least fifteen years younger than he really is.

Roy the screen personality overwhelmed Roy the musician. In fact, Roy was one of the best yodelers of his time, an excellent solo and harmony singer, a fine guitarist and a capable comedian. His place in *The Sons of the Pioneers* was filled not by another singer and guitarist, but by Pat Brady, bass-

ist, comedian, and, much later, Roy's sidekick on TV. Rogers was also a gifted songwriter who wrote several of *The Pioneers'* best early songs, including "Down Along the Sleepy Rio Grande" and, in collaboration with Tim Spencer, "Curly Joe From Idaho," "Cowboys and Indians," "Song of the San Joaquin," "South of Santa Fe" and many others.

Rogers began to record on his own as early as 1937. Examples of his solo work can be found on the CBS Historic Edition album, *The Sons of the Pioneers*. He was featured on many of their numbers, and they backed him on his first solo sessions. But Roy Rogers never became the megaseller in records that his fellow singing cowboy Gene Autry and Tex Ritter did, though he was popular enough in his era. He moved to RCA in the 1940's. By the 1950's he was recording for their children's label. Since then, except for a brief foray into the country charts in the 1970's, he has been content recording inspirational albums with his wife Dale Evans.

Perhaps it was his relative lack of impact in recordings, or perhaps it was simply the awesome power of the Hollywood myth-making apparatus. In any case, Roy Rogers the singer, songwriter and musician has been seriously undervalued, while Roy Rogers the babysitter for a generation of Americans—as he himself says with a smile—is the figure we respond to so strongly: the image of boyish strength and fearlessness, of the ability to be good without being a sissy, of respect for nature, animals and the great outdoors. However we may value Roy's contribution to Western song and regret the relative lack of recognition which he has enjoyed as a musician, one thing is certain: his movie image is branded on the American consciousness, an everlasting legacy—a tribute to Roy Rogers, King of the Cowboys.

Albums Available

See For Members Only page.



Roy and some of his many pals—from left, Roy and Gabby Hayes, Roy and Dale Evans, Roy, Dale and animal friends, Roy and Slim Pickens.



COLLECTIONS

Information, Please

Write to each other directly. Remember to enclose SASE.

• Where can I get records or sheet music of "Deck of Cards" and "Just One Rose Will Do"? J. R. Brooks, Rt. 2 Box 131, Edison, GA 31746.

• For Sale: Jim Reeves albums, many unused, some used in excellent condition. For price list, send SASE. Bret Johnson, 13617 88th Ave, N., Seminole, FL 34646.

• Looking for double feature VHS tape, *The Grand Ole Opry and Night Train to Memphis*, starring Roy Acuff. Edward Smith, 3800 Cherry Lane, Jefferson, MD 21755.

• Would like any articles, photos, news items, etc. on The Oaks, especially Wm. Lee Golden. Will trade or buy. Have many stars I can trade on. LuAnn Brutscher, 6503 Moorhaven Dr., Louisville, KY 40228.

• Looking for "In the Springtime the Roses Always Turn Red" by Johnny Burnette and "Motel and Memories" by T.G. Sheppard, also all Stoney Edwards material. Dixie Marshall, 18646 Austin Rd., Manchester, MI 48158.

• Wanted: Original 45 rpm and sleeve of "Honky Tonk Man" by Dwight Yoakam. Also six-track EP titled *Guitars, Cadillacs* recorded by Yoakam on the Oak label. Please state asking price and condition. Andrea Cusumano, 74 Raynor Rd., Ridge, NY 11961.

• For Sale: 10,000 old 78's, 45's and LPs, 8-tracks, cassettes, Stardays too. Hard-to-find country and bluegrass artists, early 1930's to 1980's. Send want list. Looking for Bill Monroe's "Walls of Time" on single or LP and any records by Ueil Alberts, Deford Bailey, Stringbean. Will buy, sell or trade with all. Franklin Darryl Porter, 408 N. Oak St., Harrison, AR 72601.

• Looking for late 1960's or early 1970's song by Bobby Lewis called "Today's Teardrops (Are Tomorrow's Rainbows)." Also a double-album entitled *Lullabies, Legends and Lies* by Bobby Bare from 16-18 years ago. Will pay any reasonable amount, records or cassettes. Bill Frazier, 2411 Jackson Bluff #16, Tallahassee, FL 32304-4558.

• Please help me find a copy of the words or words and music to this song of maybe 12 or 15 years ago: You know she's a cheater, Son/And I know you think you're the one/That's got a lot of what it takes to change her. Title maybe "Your Time's Comin'." Also need the words to a silly song, "Old Dan Lucas." Carol Ann Sutherland, Box 424, Daggett, CA 92327.

• Trying to find sheet music or lyrics for "Your Long Journey" written by A.D. and Rosilee Watson, recorded by Emmylou Harris on *Thirteen*. J. R. McCarter, 703 Mogford, Midland, TX 79701.

• Was this song ever recorded or did I dream the words? The title is "There Is a Lonely Little Robin": There's a lonely little robin in a tree by my door/Who waits for its mate to return nevermore/So remember, please remember that I'm lonely too/Like that lonely little robin, I'm waiting for you. The song could be back in years. Bernard Harrison, 83 Win-

tergreen Ct., Harrison, OH 45030.

• Did Harlan Howard write "The Key's In the Mailbox, Come On In"? I know Freddie Hart and others sing it. Did Buck Owens sing it too? Where could I get a record or cassette of him doing it? William Lee Frampton, Rt. 1 Box 151, Hurlock, MD 21643.

• Looking for Willie Nelson album. Do not know title. Cover shows Willie nailing a board on a barn, wearing overalls. Will pay reasonable price. Virgle McClure, Box 750, Etowah, NC 28729.

• Looking for a record that has sentimental value to me because of the memories it recalls. It was on the jukeboxes in 1949. I don't remember the artist or the exact title, but the lyrics went, "The gods are angry at me for loving you." Anybody help? Phyllis Beach, 19124 Brooke Grove Court, Gaithersburg, MD 21879.

• Looking for the following 45's by Wynn Stewart, or tapes of these records: "Hold Back Tomorrow," "Why Do I Love You So," "A New Love" and "Strings" Also interested in information, pictures, photographs or anything else on Wynn Stewart. Stanley Kennedy, P.O. Box 1646, Stony Plain, Alberta, Canada TOE 2G0.

• In search of: an album or cassette by Cal Smith including the songs "She Talked a Lot About Texas," and, if it still exists, a recording of Lefty Frizzell's "Honest, Hon, I Swear, Somebody Lied!" I believe the flip side of this was "The Intoxicated Rat"—it was a 78 rpm of my mother's. I am interested in anything by Lefty, if reasonably priced. Kathy Dreifeke, Rt. 1, Box 1832, Monroe, GA 30655.

• Wanted: records, tapes, photographs or anything of Gene Autry's, especially his old radio shows. Also wanted: the Ronnie Milsap albums *Legend in My Time* and *Night Things*. Jill Stewart, 413 Riverview Dr. N.E., Great Falls, MT 59404.

• Looking for albums or tapes by George Jones (Epic label) from the 1970's. Write and tell me what you have. Also looking for the June 1981 of *Country Music Magazine*. Mike Hamrick, 2335 Hazelwood Ave., Youngstown, OH 44509.

• Looking for VHS videotapes of any Olivia Newton-John specials in the late 1970's and early 1980's (there were three of them). Also a VHS tape of Glen Campbell and Tanya Tucker in concert together on HBO around 1981. I would also like to find a record by Stella Parton called "Ode to Olivia," from around 1975. Ken Wilson, 225 South 4th, Canton, IL 61520.

• Looking for albums, singles or tapes by Johnny Tillitson. Even a copy of one would be fine. Willing to pay a reasonable price. Ruth Morgan, Box 188, Davin, WV 25617.

• Looking for former Warner Bros. recording artist Karen Brooks' recording of "The Last One To Know," recorded before Reba McEntire's hit version. Can anyone tell me what album or B-side it is on and where I can obtain a copy? V.L.

Backed Up
We're backlogged again. Keep your requests coming, but keep 'em short.

Siegrist, 3939 Russell Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63110.

• Like to trade the following albums for cassettes of the same title and artist: *Now or Never*, John Schneider; *The Dukes of Hazzard with Johnny Cash*; and *Hello, I'm Johnny Cash*, Johnny Cash. Also like to trade my cassette of *The Gambler* by Kenny Rogers for a cassette of *Guitars, Cadillacs, Etc., Etc.* by Dwight Yoakam. If you have the time, I'd like to "talk country music" so write me and we'll be country music pen pals by talking about our favorite artists, albums, songs, and radio stations. Douglas Propp, Rt. 5, Box 697, Richland Ctr., WI 53581.

• Looking for the RCA album *Pride of Country Music* or the single "In the Middle of Nowhere," both by Charley Pride. Ken Furney, 1108 Schuyler St., Utica, NY 13502.

• For sale: records of all artists, out of print and hard to find. Send SASE with your requests. Robbie Dighton, 1608 N. Center, Shawnee, OK 74801.

• Lifetime Dolly Parton fan has albums, records, pictures, posters and other items about Dolly. Anyone wishing to trade items or just have a Dolly Parton pen pal, please write Dolly Parton's Pals, 405 Bayou Oaks Dr., Saraland, AL 36571.

• For Sale: *Original Hank Williams Vol. 2, Honky Tonkin* and *Vol. 3, I Saw the Light*. Never played. Still in original jacket. Also, Ritchie Valens album in good condition. W. Frank Mitchell, 8661 E. Hickory Ln., Lithia Springs, GA 30057.

• Old records for sale: Elvis' *50 Gold Awards Hits* like new. Ray Charles' *Crying Time*, 2 Bob Wills, 2 old Al Jolson, one Sophie Tucker. Zella Vandegriff, Box 491, Langley, WA 98260.

• Will pay reasonable price for record or cassette of song that goes "On the banks of the old Ponchartrain." Carl Bonham, 1809 W. Park, Anaconda, MT 59711.

• Looking for Johnny Western album of TV Western theme songs. E.C. Adams, 131 Hibbing Ave. E., Box 255, Keewatin, MN 55753.

• Looking for album *Old Rivers* by the late Walter Brennan. Cover has sunset and wagon wheel. Shirley Powell, Box 502, Denton, MD 21629.

• Need Hank Jr.'s *Kelly's Heroes* (soundtrack) to complete collection. Mrs. James Hartes, Box 383, Colome, SD 57528.

• Trying to find music by Alabama when they were Wild Country. Jacki Bovley, 626 E. Grove St., Rantoul, IL 61866.

• Looking for any records by Elvis from beginning of career to last recording. Starting new collection. Mrs. I.G. Croft Sr., Rt 9 Box 119, Valdosta, GA 31601.

• Looking for 45's of early Alabama songs: "I Wanna Be With You Tonight" (GRT 129), "My Home's In Alabama" (MDJ 1002), and on RCA, "Tennessee River," "Why, Lady, Why?," "Old Flame," "Love in the First Degree," "Take Me Down," "Close Enough to Perfect." Also, albums by Alabama as Wild Country: *Wild Country*, *Deuces Wild* and *The Alabama Band*. Will pay top money for LP's, fair price for 45's. William Schneider, 6730 W. Harrison Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53219.

• Wanted: Anything and everything by

Sylvia. Would love to correspond with Sylvia fans. Lisa Collins, 6233 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60634.

Looking for anything and everything on Steve Earle. Photos, posters, records, etc. Barbara J. Kramer, Rt 2 Box 157-A, Newman Grove, NE 68758.

• Anyone remember a song called "Give My Love to Nell" or "Two Little Children"? Anyone remember Doc Hopkins from WLS Barn Dance? What became of him? Mrs. Franklin Kassien, 781 S. Biron Dr., Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494.

• Looking for music by David Rogers, 45's albums or 8-track. Anyone know where he is? Bobby Williams, 15455 Glenoaks Blvd., Space #76, Sylmar, CA 91342. *CMSA Q & A in July/August 1987 did not turn up anything on Rogers. - Ed.*

• Looking for any posters of Elvis and his song "I Gotta Know." Would also love to hear from some Alabama fans. I am 14. Kate Heinlein, 410 S. 4th St., Aurora, IL 60505.

• Interested in buying radio transcripts from Nashville/WSM, Grand Ole Opry, *Ralph Emery Show*, WLS Chicago *Old Barn Dance*, *Midwestern Hayride*, *Ozark Jubilee*, *Renfro Valley Barn Dance*, *Louisiana Hayride*, etc. Also *Country Music Round Up* magazines of the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. Please send price lists. Bill E. Wilson, Box 233, Ellettsville, IN 47429.

• Looking for Barbara Mandrell albums, *This Time I Almost Made It* (KC 32959) and *The Best of Barbara Mandrell & David Houston* (KE 32915). Silvia Hernandez, 603 Patricia, Mercedes, TX 78570.

• Looking for album or cassette of "Rose of Cimarron" by Poco. Other song on album might be "Crazy Love." Lois Burger, 102 N.W. Acres, Lebanon, PA 17042.

• Former *Music City News* editor has lots of promo 45's and LP's for sale; some interviews with stars, other collectible recordings. Everett J. Corbin, 118 Bailey Collins Dr., Smyrna, TN 37167.

Pen Pals

Make new friends by mail.

• I am an 18-year-old country music fan. I would love to hear from anyone, any age, who also loves country music. Some of my favorites are George Strait, Ricky Skaggs, Dwight Yoakam, Reba McEntire, Alabama, Restless Heart and many more. Other interests are writing letters, shopping, watching TV and reading. Please write soon! I'll answer all letters! Pam Summers, 3345 W. Salem Rd., Burbank, OH 44214.

• I'm a fan of country music and this magazine. My interests include music, reading, movies, and collecting memorabilia. My favorite stars are Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, Barbara Mandrell, Alabama, Ronnie Milsap and Juice Newton. I would like to hear from anyone out there. I'll answer all honest letters. Emilio Torres, 135 Vernon Ave. #3-F, Brooklyn, NY 11206.

Send material for Newsletter to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, NY 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Newsletter

RESTLESS HEART

Growing Pains

Put together to showcase one man's music, they turned out to be a band after all: meet Restless Heart, five guys no longer in search of a sound.

After two albums—one a big hit—several successful singles and some time on the road, everything's coming together.

by Bob Allen

Restless Heart has come a long way for a band which still seems to be struggling to put a face on its music and achieve public recognition. I mean, let's *face* it: your average country fan would probably be hard-pressed to identify the five group members by name or match them up with their pictures. Plus, there is no

charismatic stand-out like a Randy Owen or a Jamie O'Hara. Within the music business itself, one also senses—despite the group's impressive career strides—a lingering skepticism. "Is that *Restless Brown* or *Sawyer's Heart!*?" I heard one industry insider joke when the band performed at an industry showcase concert in Nashville.

Yet despite their identity crisis, Restless Heart's music has been well-received. The band's second album, *Wheels*, released in 1986, sold well past the half-million gold mark. And from it came no fewer than four Number One country hits: "I'll Still Be Loving You," "Why Does It Have To Be (Wrong or Right)," "That Rock Don't Roll" and

The band from left: Dave Innis, Greg Jennings, Larry Stewart, Paul Gregg and John Dittrich.





Where Bob Wills Left Off ■ George Strait and The Ace in the Hole Band Pick Up the Pieces

The Texan and his band are a smash hit at Lake Tahoe, as Bob Allen looks on and gets to ask about George's musical enthusiasms and how he views life-as-fame.



It's a cool summer evening on the shores of Lake Tahoe, Nevada, as George Strait and his Ace in the Hole Band take the stage for a sold-out show at the Crystal Showroom of Caesar's Palace. When George comes striding, easily and confidently, out into the brightness of the stage lights, his trademark white hat and white western dress shirt take on a luminescence all their own. He flashes a warm, relaxed, double-wide smile at the audience that reveals a set of almost perfect teeth and sets the women to screaming and the flash bulbs to popping.

Those in the crowd at Caesar's 1,500-seat Cascade Showroom have paid

nearly \$30 a pop for their seats. Although a bit older, a bit more affluent and a bit more subdued than Strait's usual heartland audience, you can feel their growing excitement as they huddle in the dark-

ness around their tables and sip their \$4.00 beers. Strait and his band open with "I'm the Fireman," a serviceable Wayne Kemp-Mack Vickery honky-tonker which was a monster hit for George a few years back, to a chorus of applause, cheers, whistles and sensuous female shrieks. The crowd's collective roar of approval grows by a few decibels when Strait & Company kick into their next tune, a vibrant, swingy-shuffly rendition of Bob Wills' immortal "Take

by Bob Allen



SCOTT NEWTON/AUSTIN CITY LIMITS



Above, Strait appeared on Austin City Limits with the remaining members of Bob Wills' band, The Texas Playboys, and got to sing his favorite songs with his favorite band (aside from his own, that is). The crowd (mostly women) goes wild wherever he performs.

Me Back to Tulsa?"

Whatever the powerful, mysterious magic was that band leaders like Bob Wills and Hank Thompson created back in the 1930's and 1940's in the Oklahoma and Texas ballrooms and cow palaces, it looks like George Strait and The Ace in the Hole Band are bringing it to life once again and doing it with great verve, passion and artistry—even, of all places, in the glitzy showroom of an elegant Lake Tahoe gambling casino. There is also the unmistakable feeling in the air that anyone lucky enough to see and hear George Strait and his Ace in the Hole Band live in the late 1980's is seeing and hearing state-of-the-art country music at its best.

Strait himself has never been one to talk much on stage. Between songs he tells no stories, no jokes, indulges in no gimcrackery. About the most the audience gets out of him all evening is another one of those big, warm smiles and a gracious, "Thank you very much, it's great to be in Lake Tahoe tonight, what a great place to be. Here's one for the ladies!"

Beneath the spotlights, Strait is, I admit, ruggedly handsome, and very easy to rest the eyes upon. He's got those dark, piercing eyes, that thick head full of close-cropped, jet-black hair which you don't really see except on rare occasions when he tips his hat to the audience or to his own fine band. He has the sort of trim, compact frame that was made for a pair of snug-fitting blue jeans.

Between vocals, he ambles around the stage with the sort of relaxed, controlled confidence that surely comes with knowing that your audience is more or less in the palm of your hand even before you step out on stage. Relying on hand signals and thrusts of his guitar, he leads the Ace in the Hole Band through one of its many extended instrumental breaks. Then he strides casually up to the footlights to accept one of the dozens of floral bouquets that are handed up to him in the course of the evening. Every time he flashes that smile again, it sets the women screaming and the flash bulbs popping with renewed intensity.

And make no mistake about it: even if the mainline country/honkytonk field has, of late, become crowded with a platoon of contenders—Randy Travis, Keith Whitley, Larry Boone and Dwight Yoakam among them—Strait is still the man to match in the vocal department. Ol' George can belt 'em out, low and mean and growling when he wants to, and come off sounding just like George or Merle, those two aging and slightly tattered country kings who were his role models during his own starting-out days in the Texas saloons

and honkytonks. He can chill the crowd out with a buzz-saw edged honkytonk ode like "All My Ex's Live In Texas" or "Unwound" or a revved-up and shuffling version of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues." He can reel off the title cut from his new album, Tommy Collins' "If You Ain't Lovin', You Ain't Livin'" and imbue it with the hard-bitten, mocking overtones of a latter-day Hank Williams.

Make no mistake about it, though: the real show-stoppers, either in Strait's concerts or in his overall career, are the love songs. When Strait rares back and unleashes that full-blown, surprisingly sensuous baritone of his on a tear-jerking, lost-love ballad—"Nobody in His Right Mind," "Baby Blue" or "You Look So Good in Love" come to mind—eyes start misting, spines start tingling, and another brigade of female admirers (age five to 65) surge quietly up toward the stage with their flash cameras and flowers.

"I think even up until 'Marina Del Rey,' which was a hit single for him in 1982, most people thought of George as just another honkytonk singer," observes Erv Woolsey, the former record promotion man who has been Strait's manager since day-one. "They didn't realize that he could really sing just about anything."

And as if Strait's looks and his certified-platinum vocal chords weren't enough, there's the great eight-piece Ace in the Hole Band: Mike Daily (steel), Gene Elders (fiddle), Benny McArthur (guitar), Rick McRae (guitar), Phil Fisher (drums), Terry Hale (bass), David Anthony (acoustic guitar) and Ronnie Huckaby (piano). Most of the Ace in the Hole Boys are from Texas; three of them have been with Strait since his woodshedding days in the San Marcos clubs and keg parties.

All you have to do is listen to Gene Elders, a classical violinist by training, take one of his rapturous fiddle solos on the old Bob Wills tune "Cherokee Maiden"; or hear David Anthony hammer out a low-down and mean acoustic guitar solo on "Folsom Prison Blues"; or follow Ronnie Huckaby as he takes an extended piano ride during the instrumental break on "Ocean Front Property" to realize that this outfit is indeed a far cry from your average rinky-dink, set-em-up, knock-em-down, play-the-hits-by numbers country road band. These guys mean business; and they have evolved into one of the best country road bands on the scene, right up there with Merle Haggard's Strangers or Willie Nelson's Family Band.

Nobody, of course, knows this better than Strait. He is careful to give the



"Bob Wills and the Playboys are simply the best band that ever was," says Strait about his major musical influence.

band lots of wide open space and breathing room to strut their stuff during the instrumental breaks. And he himself obviously delights in playing the role of band leader. He smiles and throws in ecstatic little Bob Wills-style chortles and calls of pleasure and approval as he and the band shuffle, swing and segue their way through a repertoire that includes not just Strait's own substantial body of hits, but a fair smattering of immortal honkytonk oldies like Hank Thompson's "A Six Pack to Go," Hank Williams' "Lovesick Blues" and Webb Pierce's "There Stands the Glass."

But it's on the Bob Wills standards—"Big Ball's in Cow Town," "Milk Cow Blues," "Cherokee Maiden," "Take Me Back to Tulsa" and more—that The Ace in the Hole Band really shows its expert feel for the Western swing/Texas swing idiom. A typical Strait concert will include about half a dozen of these tunes, done in masterly style. No doubt, if old Bob Wills himself were around to hear them, he'd tip his hat and 'Eeee-haw' with pleasure, characteristically understated.

"I've got a great band, so why not let 'em play," Strait himself later comments. "It's fun to get up there and not only play the records, but to do some other stuff, as well, that's sometimes kind of off-the-wall, you know. I love the big-band sound. You get such a full sound up on stage with that many players. If I could, I'd add more—a third fiddle-player, probably a mandolin-player, and maybe even some horns—like Wills had"

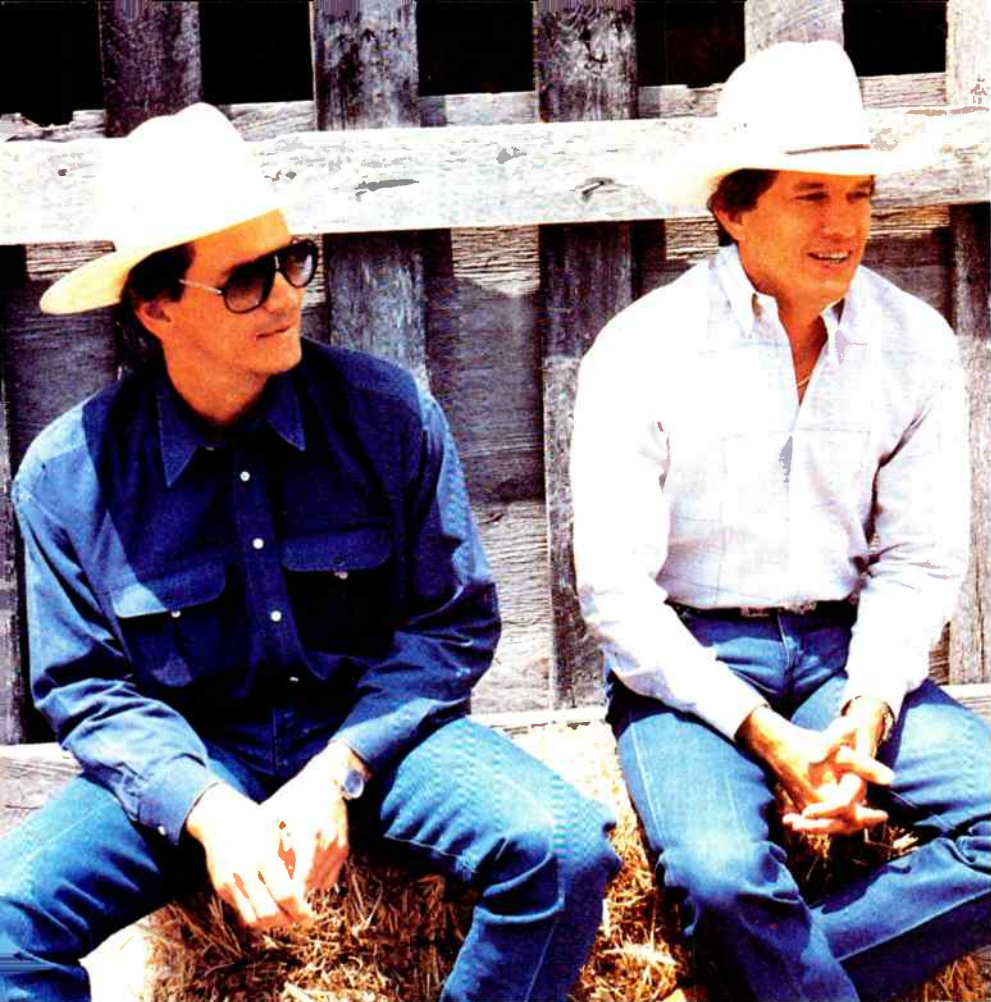
A typical George Strait concert these days runs about two hours. But by prior agreement, the three Caesar's Palace performances have been trimmed down to about an hour and a half each. (The

prevailing wisdom is that every extra minute a customer spends in the show-room listening to some singer is another minute that he or she is not out on the casino floor dropping money at the black jack tables or the slot machines.) Strait saves "Marina Del Rey" for his encore; and as he tips his hat and smiles one more time before he disappears into the back stage shadows, the crowd is on its feet, giving him a boisterous standing ovation.

Leaving aside two "greatest hits" packages, George Strait has recorded nine albums since he came tearing out of South Texas obscurity and into the limelight back in 1980. And this substantial body of recorded work has, thus far, been a chain without so much as a single weak link. Each new album has seemed to solidify and build upon the obvious strengths of the ones before, strengths summed up in Strait's no-nonsense approach, his power and emotion as a country vocal interpreter, and his almost unerring sixth sense for picking great material.

Consequently, with each new release, the tide of Strait's appeal as both an excellent singer and country music's reigning sex symbol has steadily risen. "Sex symbol" is a designation Strait himself has never been comfortable with, but facts are facts: in a recent *Music City News* poll of country fans he came in second only to Randy Owen as country's sexiest singer. Step by step this mild-mannered, soft-spoken, unassuming club singer from San Marcos, Texas, has been transformed by the power of his music and the spell-binding quality of his live presence into a bona fide national phenomenon.

With his latest single "Baby Blue"



COURTESY GEORGE STRAIT FAN CLUB

George and brother Buddy compete at the George Strait Team Roping contest.

edging up to the top of the charts, Strait now has 20 Number One records to his credit. Each and every one of his albums has passed the gold (half-million sales) plateau, and two of the more recent ones, *Marina Del Rey* and *Greatest Hits, Volume 1*, have been certified platinum for sales in excess of a million. As many as three of his albums have been in the charts simultaneously, and he recently made a bit of musical history when *Ocean Front Property* became the first country album to enter the charts at Number One.

The Country Music Association's tip of the hat to Strait in the form of its 1985 and 1986 Male Vocalist of the Year awards seems like a paltry afterthought in light of the massive acceptance he has enjoyed out on the grassroots concert trail, where it really counts. He set a new attendance record in 1987 when 49,246 people showed up for his performance at the Houston Astrodome's annual Livestock Show & Rodeo. And not long ago, he became the first artist since Elvis Presley to sell out a show at the Las Vegas Hilton. Even the legendary Colonel Tom Parker, Presley's long-term mentor/manager (and presently a consultant for the Hilton Hotel chain), has been transformed into a George Strait fan. More than once, the Colonel has showed up backstage wearing his

"George Strait" hat just to have a chat with George.

No one has been more surprised, even perhaps even a little bit mystified, by all this than Strait himself. "I never dreamed I could be as successful as I

"I never dreamed I could be as successful as I have been."

have been," he shakes his head and says softly as he sits in his dressing room between shows. "I had no idea all this would happen. I really didn't. I mean, I did always have it in the back of my mind that I could have hit records on the radio, but..." He laughs incredulously. "I remember when I first signed with MCA Records, and I went into their offices in Nashville, I remember lookin' at all those gold records on the wall and thinking, 'Good grief, man!' I remember I even asked Erv, my manager, 'Hey Erv, you think I'll ever have

one of those?...' So, it's really been like a dream come true."

Strait—who is obviously a *very* private person—laments the loss of personal privacy which has come as a result of his rather immense celebrity. On the other hand, he seems pleasantly awed by the "sex symbol" aspect of it—if only in so far as its salutary effect on his live performances goes.

"That was a great thing that happened," he says, as his eyes brighten. "It's something I don't guess you ever really get used to, but it sure makes it a lot easier to come on stage when the crowd's reacting like that. I feed off of it, the whole band feeds off of it. You really get pumped up and get into it."

The adulation—not to say hysteria—that Strait and his music inspire in hardcore country fans is particularly apparent in the crowd at the backstage door after one of the Tahoe shows. Among the die-hards who are clamoring to get backstage to visit with George is an old boy from Texas who used to be the drummer's neighbor. There are also a couple of outlandishly pretty, if slightly under-age, school girls who want Strait to sign their pictures of him. A girl on crutches clutches still another bouquet of roses which she wants to deliver to him personally. None of the above, however, pass muster with tour coordinator Danny O'Brian. His ever-watchful and skeptical eye does not blink. With the help of a couple of uniformed hotel security guards, he politely but firmly turns them all away.

At the elevators which link this floor to the maze of corridors above that lead to the dressing room where Strait is relaxing between shows stand a couple more uniformed hotel guards—shades of Elvis Presley all over again.

Strait himself is, as you might expect, exceedingly polite and accommodating with the handful of visitors and well-wishers who are allowed access to the austere inner sanctum of the dressing room. Cordial as he is, however, he seems slightly claustrophobic in the well-guarded storm's eye of his own fame. For one thing, he is not overly adept at small talk, and there are all these little signs of impatience that show through the veneer of his gentility. He restlessly pulls on the brim of his hat. ("Yep, okay, see ya later, thanks for comin' by...") And his eyes wander fleetingly around the room as he is showered with the usual compliments on his show and his singing. Now and then he fidgets like an old farmer who's been dragged along by his wife on a Sunday social call when he'd rather be home milking the cows. He becomes more at ease as the number of strangers in the

dressing room dwindles.

"I think the hardest part of all this for George is not that *he's* any different than he ever was, but that all the rest of us are," Danny O'Brian observes. "After the show, he likes to hang out with the band sometimes, but it's sort of like now everybody tiptoes around him. Even I look at him differently than I used to. When I first met him, he was just another hillbilly singer. His first record was out, but it wasn't a hit yet. But now, he's... *George Strait!*"

"The hardest part of all this," Strait himself observes in his surprisingly soft, almost wavery, speaking voice, "is being treated like a star. I hate that. I really do, and it's sometimes hard for me to deal with it. I love my fans, I really do. But, ya know, it's hard for me to take bein' treated that way."

Even so, Strait, by all indications, has it very much under control. For a man who has just wowed a show room full of 1500 people, and who, in an hour or so, will walk back out on stage and wow 1500 more, he seems exceedingly relaxed, almost placid. He is settled into a thickly cushioned sofa, sipping on a drink that appears to be a very weak whiskey and water. His cowboy boot-clad feet are resting on the circular coffee table, and his big white Resistol hat is balanced on his knee. Up close, Strait looks young and fresh-faced, more so than you'd expect for a 35-year-old man who pretty much has the country music world on a string.

Obviously, interviews are not George's favorite thing in the whole wide world. He does not seem to be cursed with any particular need to delve into the "whys" and "wherefores" of his immense success or the spiritual implications of that personal magnetism of his which makes women—and sometimes men, too—want to grab him, hug him, kiss him and even (in some rare cases) climb up on stage and drag him back to the ranch house with them. As the tape recorder begins to roll, he is receptive, but not what you would really call forthcoming. He fields the questions that are put to him, answering dutifully and briefly, then clams up, pulls back into himself and waits for the next one, letting the silence lie there uneasily. He's conveniently scheduled our interview between the two shows, as if to ensure a cutting-off point.

Some of his reluctance is related to the death of his teen-aged daughter in an automobile accident a couple of years back. In the wake of that tragedy, Danny O'Brian later explains, that was *all* the media wanted to ask him about. As a result, Strait almost stopped doing interviews. Not surprisingly, the

advance ground rule for this interview is that that particularly hurtful subject will not be touched upon. So it is not.

One quickly detects that there is also, on Strait's part, a conscious effort to deflate myths churned out by the record business public-relations machine or the media. He is one country star who, thank you very much, would prefer *not* to be seen as larger-than-life. For instance, when he's asked about the exact acreage of the ranch he recently bought in South Texas, where he says he now spends the majority of his time when he's off the road, he hesitates. "Well, I'd really hate to print that," he laughs a slightly uneasy, "awshucks" laugh. "It's a pretty good-sized ranch..."

When he's asked to confirm a statement that appeared in one of his official record company artist biographies to the effect that he is a fourth-generation Texas cattle rancher, there's that "awshucks, c'mon, give me a break!" laugh once again: "I don't know...I know I've lived there all my life, my dad's lived there all his life, and his dad..."

But get Strait on a more neutral and comfortable subject, and he will begin to loosen up a bit and stop choosing his words so cautiously. Like the new ranch, itself: "I've just got some ropin' steers and some horses on it right now, but as soon as prices go back down, I'm gonna run some cattle on it."

Or the Sixth Annual George Strait Team Roping Contest which he sponsors, along with his brother Buddy, and competes in each spring in Kingsville, Texas: "It was a two-day event this year," he says proudly. "We had almost five hundred ropers, some of the best in the state, and at least one world champion. I competed myself—although, up against those guys, I'm not much competition!" he laughs. "I played on the last night. It's really a great event. I loved it so much. It's like a vacation for me."

Or Bob Wills: "Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys are simply the best band that ever was," says the singer who a year or so ago joined Willie Nelson and the remaining members of Wills' band, The Texas Playboys, in a special taping of the syndicated TV show *Austin City Limits*. Strait also readily admits that his own Ace in the Hole Band has been modeled after Bob Wills and his famed Western swing ensemble of yesteryear, at least to some extent.

"Merle Haggard's tribute album to Wills was what really got me turned on to Wills," he recalls, speaking of Haggard's *The Best Damned Fiddle Player In the World* released in 1970. "After that, I really just fell in love with his music. I really love to sing those songs of his, and the band does 'em really



HUGH LIECKE/EVERETT PHOTOGRAPHY

Even though he's quite a horseman, George is modest about his achievements. He says at this year's contest he wasn't that much competition against some of the best ropers in Texas.



good. In fact, in the old days we used to play a lot more of 'em than we do now. My next album I want to try some swing, maybe even use some horns."

To get a grasp of just how George Strait came to be this generation's newest ambassador-at-large of country and Texas swing music, it helps to take a quick look back at his own roots in the rowdy dance halls and vast, dusty ranch lands of South Texas. He was born in 1952, near the small southwest Texas settlement of Poteet, the second son of a junior high school math teacher. "It wasn't exactly a country music upbringing," he recalls. "My dad didn't even have a record player, and when he listened to the radio, it was usually the news or the cow market reports, or something like that. If a song happened to come on, I never paid much attention to what it was."

Strait, who still lists "jackpot" (contest) steer roping along with golf and fishing as his favorite offstage pursuits, came of age helping his father on the family's substantial cattle holdings in the desolate, sun-drenched country around Big Wells, Texas, just an hour or

"Every time I go in the studio to make a new record, I get nervous because I want it to be my best ever."

so from the Mexican border. In high school he played cornet and occasionally stinted as lead singer in, he says, "some of your basic high school garage bands. We'd play 'Gloria,' 'Louie, Louie,' and stuff like that." Shortly after graduation he eloped to Mexico with his high school sweetheart, to whom he is still married today.

He spent a couple of lackluster semesters at Southwest Texas State University (Lyndon Johnson's alma mater) before signing up for a three-year hitch in the army. He ended up in the payroll

department—in Hawaii, of all places. "I just couldn't believe it," he laughs. When the base commander decided to organize a country band, he decided to apply for the job.

"I always knew I wanted to be a country singer," explains Strait, who still mentions Frank Sinatra as one of his own favorite singers. "But it wasn't until I ended up in Hawaii that I really got serious about it. At first, I was just trying to learn guitar, so I sent off for sheet music by artists like Hank Williams, George Jones and Merle Haggard, who are still my biggest influences."

A short time later, he fell under the spell of Bob Wills' music, as well.

In 1975, Strait returned to Texas and civilian life. He re-enrolled at Southwest Texas State in San Marcos. He put together his Ace in the Hole Band and began performing in local clubs while earning a degree in agricultural education. After graduation he embarked on a grueling and frustrating period, trying to balance the duties of raising a family with the rigors of a sunup-to-sundown job as a cattle ranch manager and the sundown-to-sunup demands of performing at local dance halls and college keg parties four or five nights a week. Nowadays, still balancing, his six-year-old son George Jr., or "Bubbah," often travels with him.

During those years, he made a couple of unsuccessful trips to Nashville. "Drove all night, stayed at the Hall of Fame Motor Inn, did a session with some musician friends of mine, and pitched it around town with no luck at all," he explains. And he recalls that, by 1979, "I was just fixin' to go ahead and quit. I was 27 years old, I'd been playing for six or seven years, and I was beginning to think I just wasn't good enough and maybe ought to try something else. I gave my band notice and signed up for a full-time job with this outfit in Uvalde, Texas, that designed cattle pens. But a week before I was to report for the job, I realized I just couldn't do it. And I decided to give it one more year."

A couple of years earlier, Strait had met fellow Texan Erv Woolsey, who, at that time, had left the record business behind to run a night club in San Marcos called The Prairie Rose. "The first time I heard George sing," Woolsey remembers, "I was standing in the back of the club with my back to him. When I heard him crank up, I just had to turn around and see who was singing. I knew right then he was a great singer. So I introduced myself and started talking to him. I know at first he was a little skeptical of me, but we went on to become great friends."

Woolsey eventually gave up his club



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and moved to Chicago to take another record promotion job. But he and Strait kept in touch. In 1980, just six months or so after Strait had almost given up on the music to join the nine-to-five work-a-day world for keeps, Woolsey landed him a contract with MCA/Nashville, where Woolsey himself was by then employed as a promotion man.

"George came along when country music was not exactly the darling of Nashville," Woolsey recalls with a trace of cynicism in his laughter. "I'm from Texas, too, so I can identify with George. I remember people wantin' him to wear those shirts with the studs on them, and bell bottom jeans, because they thought that was just the cool thing to do. But George fought all that from day one."

In spite of all his Number One singles and gold records, the struggle to be himself artistically goes on for Strait. Beneath his easy-going exterior and soft-spoken shyness lurks an iron-willed stubbornness that he has had to summon up again and again to keep his fundamentalist musical instincts from being trounced in the name of commerce.

A couple of years ago, for just these sorts of reasons, he scrapped nearly an entire album's worth of unreleased material and parted ways with his long-time producer, Blake Mevis. "We just got to where we were buttin' heads right and left," he recalls without any evidence of ill feeling. "He really wanted me to go a little more towards pop-flavored tunes, and I just didn't want to do that, wasn't comfortable with it at all. I'm the one who has to get up there every night and sing 'em, and those just weren't the kind of songs I wanted to sing. So we finally sat down and said, 'Hey, we gotta part ways. This just ain't workin.'"

"Then Ray Baker produced the *Right or Wrong* album, which was a good album—my first album to go gold. But then when I got the opportunity from Jimmy Bowen to co-produce my own albums and have more control in the studio, I had to jump on it." Producer Bowen was and is president of MCA Records' Nashville operations.

"I don't know," Strait meditates, as he scratches his head and fiddles with the band of his Resistol hat. "It might have just been because of my nervousness in the studio, but when I was working with those other producers, I was a little bit afraid to put my own two cents' worth in. I would do it, ya know, but I always felt like maybe I was stepping out of line a little bit. But I know I *shouldn't* have felt like that, because it's *my* music that's going out there.

"But Jimmy Bowen's just great," he laughs affectionately. "It's funny the



LIBBY LEVERETT

Gold and platinum albums are becoming a matter of course for George.

way we co-produce an album, because I don't think anybody else does it quite like this. I go in the studio and I can do my part in four or five days—cut the basic tracks, do my vocals. Then we'll go over the different songs, and we'll decide where we want harmony parts, and how many, and this and that. And I'll go on home to Texas, or wherever, and he'll go back in the studio and do 'em. Then he'll send me all these cassette tapes of what he's done, and I'll listen to them and call him up and say yes to this, or no to that, or 'This sounds great,' or 'Let's change this to this,' or 'Let's cut this part out.' Jimmy will go back in the studio and make all the changes, then send me another cassette of it to listen to. He'll send me maybe twenty cassettes before we finally get through!

"I'm real serious about my music," Strait adds with particular emphasis. "Every time I go in the studio to make a new record, I get nervous because I want it to be my best ever. Not really different, but just *better*—because I hope to be doing this same thing for years to come."

The conversation lags a bit as Strait's road manager appears in the dressing room bearing the freshly dry-cleaned white shirt that Strait will wear for the second show. This is as good a signal as any that the interview time is just about over.

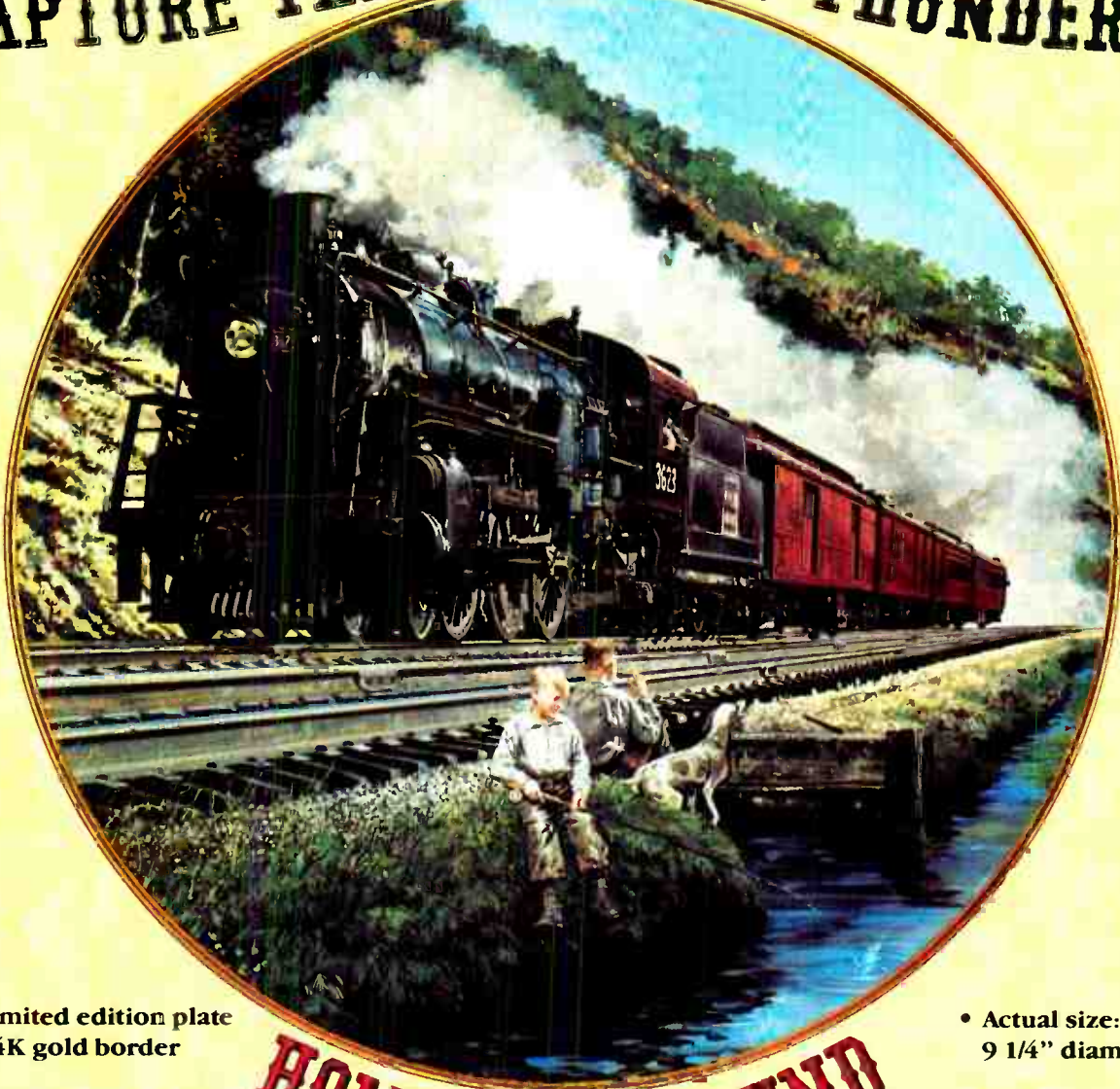
But before he goes out and turns the showroom full of people on their collective ear once again, there is still time to slip in one last question. So I bring up an interesting anecdote that appeared in one of Strait's press releases. It concerns a late-night incident not too long ago, when Strait's old pick-up truck broke down on a remote Texas back road, and he was dramatically confronted with the double-edged implications of his own fame and both the benefits and embarrassments it can sometimes bring. "How'd you hear about that!?" he asks with amazement, before gleefully recounting the incident himself—showing proof positive that this is one country star who's smart enough *not* to read his own press releases!

"Boy, that was pretty embarrassing," Strait laughs with shamefaced delight as he recounts the episode. "I was down at my ranch, and something was wrong with my truck. So I have this other old truck down there that I drove back when I was in college. I wanted to go over and see my dad, and his ranch is about 35 or 40 miles from where mine is. So I decided I'd drive the old truck. So I'm goin' down this old back road. No houses, barely a little of' two-lane black-top road. And all of a sudden, the old truck just quits on me. Well, I could see this guy's house way back off the road. And I figured, well, if it won't start, I guess I'll just walk on up there. But pretty soon, his foreman came by in his truck, and I tell him I can't get mine started. And he said, 'Come on up and use the phone.' So I got in his truck with him and his little boy, and he looks at me, and goes... 'Aren't you?...' And I go, 'Yeh, yeh...'" Strait laughs again and shakes his head. "I mean, boy, I was really embarrassed. He kept thankin' me for getting in his truck, and I kept thankin' him for giving me a ride! I could just see it in his face, him wonderin', 'What's *he* doin' out here in the middle of the night in that beat up old truck!?"

"That's the kind of little situation there that will really humble a person," Strait chuckles again as he ever so calmly rises from the sofa, to change his shirt, don his big white hat and amble over toward the showroom where another sell-out crowd of true believers is already clamoring for him, waiting to adore him, lay flowers at his feet and shower him with their applause, affection and adulation. "It's the kind of situation that will really keep your feet on the ground!"

Strait laughs and flashes that foolish grin again as he is escorted out the door flanked by his road manager and a couple of the security guards with two-way radios. "I know it sure did me!" ■

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Record Reviews

Becky Hobbs
All Keyed Up
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I've not been floored by many of the female "New Generation" artists my colleagues like. Notable exceptions are The Sweethearts of the Rodeo and Reba (though her new album worries me). No male chauvinism intended, but just as some are pop singers in cowboy boots, some are also folkies or rockers in the same getups. k.d. lang's cowpunk pretense infuriates me, and Nanci Griffith's literary, spiritless folkiness bores me to tears.

Becky Hobbs is another matter. She writes hardcore rockers and honky tonk as fine and earthy as Whitey Shafer's or Steve Earle's and pounds enough piano to make Jerry Lee himself think about it. Her voice is as smoky, rough-hewn and expressive as Loretta's, in her early years. She's also no wide-eyed newcomer. Fourteen years of recording for both big and small labels with minimal success—save one hit duet with Moe Bandy—has seasoned her well.

For this, her second debut (her first was on MCA in 1974), MTM pulled out the stops. Her producer: Richard Bennett, producer of Steve Earle, Patty Loveless, Jo-El Sonnier and now Emmylou Harris—soon to be heard on her forthcoming album. The musicians: members of her band helped by a few studio pickers. The material: first-rate, all written or co-written by Becky. The results: perfection.

With the crack of a snare



drum, this bunch tears into the opener, "They Always Look Better When They're Leavin'," an energetic Texas shuffle that would give George Strait himself pause. "Mama Was a Working Man" sounds like the title of a stupid novelty, but the song turns out to be a straightforward ode to working mothers that comes to the point with plenty of down-to-earth class. "She Broke Her Promise" is a poignant tribute to love unbroken by death. Such songs usually drown in syrupiness. Since Becky's own parents inspired the song, this doesn't.

The unabashed feel of reminiscence makes "Cowgirl's Heart" more than just another song about an ex-lover recalling the past. The lighthearted "I'm A-Gonna Get to You" has the crazy, good-humored spirit of mid-1960's George Jones, and Becky's voice catches that

same playful edge. "All Keyed Up" likewise catches Jerry Lee's crazed rockabilly feel the way few women—or men—could. No copying or imitating here: Becky does it on *her* terms.

"Jones on the Jukebox," a George Jones tribute out as a single, is a novelty built around titles of Jones hits and might not have worked had Becky's performance not been so strong. Some "country" stations reportedly won't play it because it is too traditional. Sorta proves my point that some "country" stations are havens for burned out rock 'n' rollers.

The frustration and pain of leaving someone who cheated once too often is tackled masterfully in "It's Because I Do." And pain is confronted again in "Old Flame Turns Blue," which you should be able to figure out without my explaining it. "Are There Any More Like You (Where

You Came From)" is bright, uninhibited Western swing. Becky's vocal and the infectious 1940's harmonies conjure up memories of the unheralded singer Ann Jones, among the few female Western swing bandleaders of the 1940's. This song brings the record full circle.

Many women have tried to create a feminine, hard-country sound with an edge that equals a man's. Few have succeeded. Some couldn't pull it off; others could and did, but the law of averages dictates that most aspiring performers, male and female, simply don't make it. I think Becky will. If she doesn't, there's no justice.

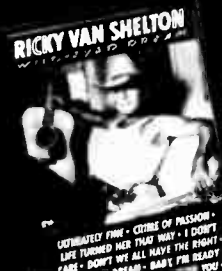
—RICH KIENZLE

Keith Whitley
Don't Close Your Eyes
RCA 6494-1-R

There are quite a few of us who've known all along what a superb singer Keith Whitley is—easily the equal of John Anderson, Dwight Yoakam or George Strait, and on a good day, right up there with Randy Travis. Ironically, however, in order to realize the true depth and magnitude of Whitley's hard country vocal talents, a listener had to go back almost all the way to *Somewhere Between*, an unforgettable album he made in the early 1980's with newgrass J.D. Crowe and his band.

For reasons still not quite clear, Whitley's vocal genius, something akin in spirit to latter-day Haggard or Frizzell, did not shine on the first two RCA albums that followed *Somewhere Between*. A *Hard Act to Fol-*

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356329. Randy Travis—Always And Forever, Forever, And Ever, Amen. (Warner Bros.)

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THE SHOOTERS 366617 [EPIC]	EAGLES Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975 287003 [A&M]	NANCI GRIFFITH Little Love Affairs 366609 [MCA]
CHARLY McCLAIN STILL I STAY 352757 [EPIC]	ELTON JOHN Live In Australia 358929 398925 [MCA]	RONNIE McDOWELL Older Women And Other Greatest Hits 353540 [EPIC]
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AIR SUPPLY GREATEST HITS 321307 [ARISTA]	JULIO IGLESIAS NON-STOP 367094 [COLUMBIA]	GENE WATSON Honky Tonk Crazy 355420 [EPIC]
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MIDNIGHT OIL DIESEL AND DUST 366153 [COLUMBIA]	NATALIE COLE EVERLASTING 369439 [REPRISE]	DON McLEAN Greatest Hits—Then & Now 361337 [BIRD AMERICA]
PATTY LOVELESS If My Heart Had Windows 366724 [MCA]	THE BELLAMY BROTHERS Crazy From The Heart 361360 [MCA/COLUMBIA]	GEORGE JONES SUPER HITS 362699 [EPIC]
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ANDY WILLIAMS Close Enough For Love 351486 [MCA]	WAYLON JENNINGS A Man Called Hoss 362681 [MCA]	TANYA TUCKER Love Me Like You Used To 359661 [CAPITOL]
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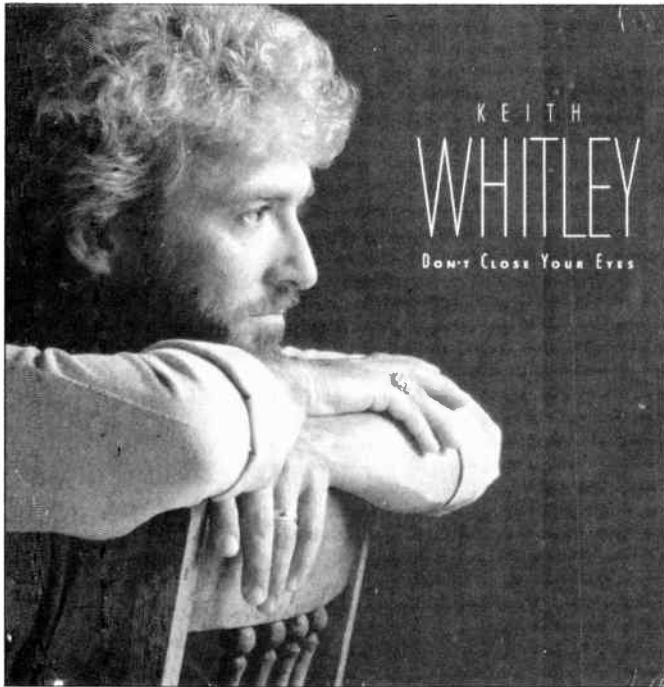
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Record Reviews



low: released in 1984 and produced by Norro Wilson, clung so slavishly to Whitley's roots and to his outlook as a Lefty Frizzell disciple that it ended up being too much 1950's Lefty Frizzell and not enough 1980's Keith Whitley. The follow-up, *L.A. to Miami*, produced by Blake Mevis, did have moments of brilliance; but by and large it ended up showcasing Keith to the general public as just another cotton-voiced kountry crooner with a gold chain and a perm.

But at long last, long after some of us had begun to fear that the wonderful Keith Whitley of *Somewhere Between* days was gone forever, Whitley has re-emerged with his talents intact. With *Don't Close Your Eyes*, his new album, he finally lives up to all the great expectations he brought to Nashville with him when he gave up stardom in the bluegrass field and came charging on to the contemporary country scene like a knight on a white horse.

One reason things jelled so beautifully this time around is that Whitley himself finally seized the reins of power. He co-produced *Don't Close Your Eyes* with Garth

Fundis, Don Williams' longtime producer. Fundis—as witnessed to by so many of Williams' best records, and by his work with Whitley—is a man with the impeccable taste to keep the arrangements austere to the point of being almost folksy. He also obviously has the confidence and common sense to let Keith Whitley be Keith Whitley for a change.

Accordingly, Whitley shines unblemished on nearly every cut. The songs themselves are written by veterans like Bob McDill, Sonny Curtis, Don Schlitz and Paul Overstreet, as well as by lesser known but no less talented composers such as Kim Morrison, Gary Talley and Ron Hallard. When taken together, the entire batch has the sterling ring of fine crystal—a pristine collection of neo-country classics.

Whitley kicks things off with "Flying Colors," a tale of cruel irony, featuring the festering bitterness of a man who swallows the pain of a broken heart and spits it back up as bile. "It's All Coming Back to Me Now," which Whitley co-wrote with Curly Putman and Don Cook, is the sort of medium-tempo,

waltzy, deep-throated love song which could easily land Whitley right smack dab in Top Five George Strait territory. "Don't Close Your Eyes" is the earnest plea of a man who has won his lover's body, yet realizes her heart still belongs to someone else. It is also possibly the best song that Bob McDill has ever written; and Whitley sings it as if his own heart is possessed with all its fragile, heart-stopping emotion.

There are other diamonds here, as well. There's an update of the old Frizzell-Shafer classic, "I Never Go Around Mirrors," for which Shafer has even written a whole new last verse. Whitley recorded this song once before, back in his days with the J.D. Crowe Band; only this time, he steps out of Frizzell's shadow and manages to bring his own *fresh* interpretation to its despairing lyrics.

Then there's Sonny Curtis' and Ron Hellard's unforgettable "I'm No Stranger to the Rain," a deceptively simple-sounding song which, at heart, is about survival and redemption through suffering.

I could go on right down the list because nearly every

cut is an almost perfect wedding of singer and song with Whitley pulling the emotional heart out of the song and turning it inside out with all the simmering intensity of a bulldog tearing up a basketball.

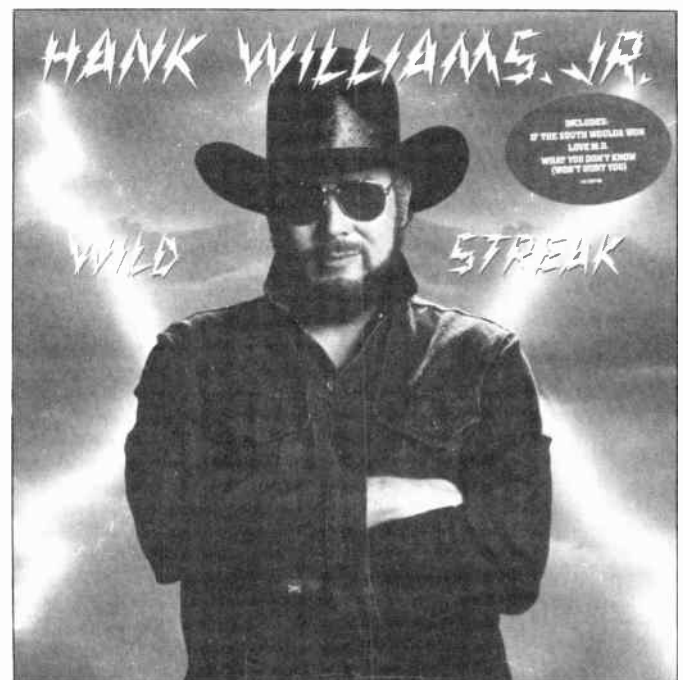
Glory be! Keith Whitley was lost, but now he's found! It was a long time in coming, but it was well worth the wait.

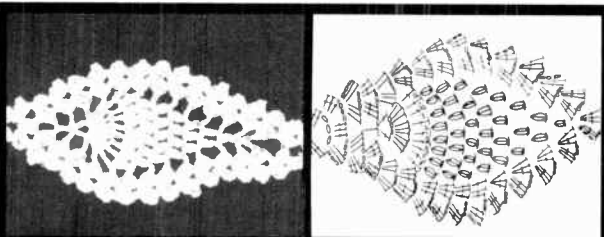
—BOB ALLEN

Hank Williams Jr.
Wild Streak
Warner Bros. 1-25725

Okay, let's get this out of the way right up front. Hank Williams Jr. don't mind stirring up trouble one little bit. Heck, he likes it. When things start quieting down, it's not beyond Hank to take a sharp stick and poke the animal a couple of times and get him growling again.

Which brings us to "If the South Woulda Won," one of the single releases on *Wild Streak*, his latest. I don't know how things are where you live, but he's managed to flat create a tempest in a teapot in Florida—I think that





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(By Brenda Keith)

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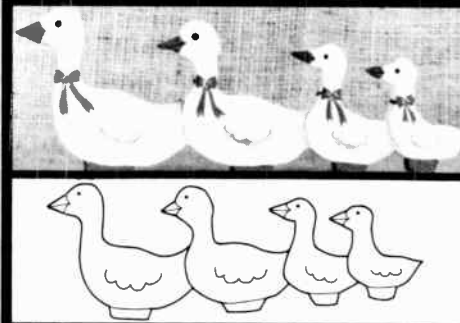
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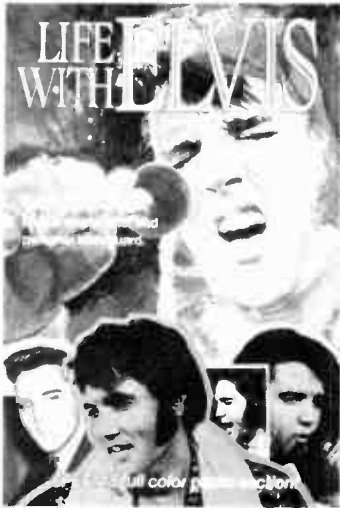
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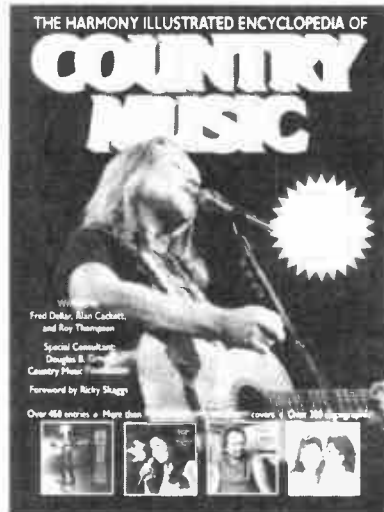
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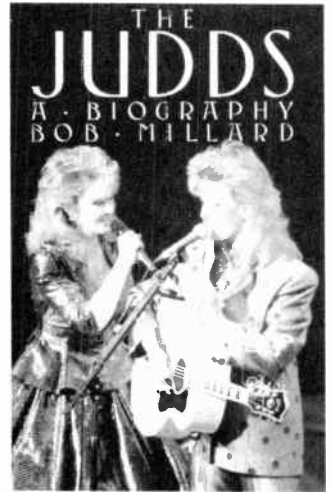
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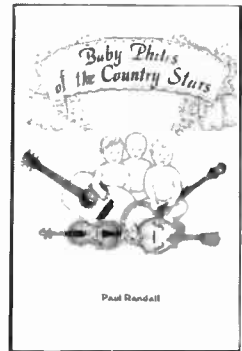
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Record Reviews



line about "taking Miami back" really torqued some people off. Which was, I think, the point. I mean, we got a song here that says everything would have been all right if the South had won the War (you remember which war, don'tcha?). Hank Jr. would probably run for president—hell, I'd vote for him. Wouldn't you?

I mean, this is music, not the Democratic Party Platform (actually, *all* Hank's songs make more sense than either party's platform). And it is Hank's music. Hank Williams Junior is, and, I suspect, always will be skating out there on the edge. Even when he wins long-overdue awards from a music establishment that still thinks he's three-quarters bats, he can't help pushing the envelope. Once you're sure he's boogie bar band boy, he'll go back and cut something that sounds suspiciously like 1960's country, like something on the first Hank Jr.'s Greatest Hits album (1967... something like that). He'll cut an anthem like "New Country," then come back with an album like *Wild Streak*, which strikes me as kind of a Lynyrd Skynyrd-ish

type album. Southern Rock big time.

It's not my favorite Hank album, maybe because it reminds me of better days in Macon and a few hot nights in Atlanta. But I won't argue with you whether it's good or not, because I think Hank Jr. is working from a different set of standards. Think of him as the equivalent of country heavy metal—a whole substyle that everyone likes to ignore but is, in fact, hugely popular with the troops, especially the kids. He hasn't broken any ground here, but given how much ground he's broken, who cares?

And, yeah, "If the South Woulda Won" pissed a lot of people off. I bet Hank had a good laugh at that one.

Actually, what I really like on this record is, in fact, a Lynyrd Skynyrd song, "Tuesday's Gone," written by Allen Collin and Ronnie Van Zant. It always was one of my favorite Southern rockers, derivative as all get out, but soulful enough to break your heart. Hank Jr. plays it straight, a soulful recording of a soulful song. I love it when he has to reach for a song, reach out there in the ether and make it

his own. He's great on this one, folks.

So I say, kick 'em again, cousin. I like to see 'em jump.

—MICHAEL BANE

The Forester Sisters

Sincerely

Warner Bros. 25746-4

Painless.

But, then again, people say that about dentists.

Tell you the truth, I'm not going to take The Forester Sisters to task for this fourth album any more than I did for the third album. I've got to tell you, though, that I worry when I see a record with four producers—Wendy Waldman, Jim Ed Norman, Barry Beckett and James Stroud—getting the credit. What that tells me is that either there were lots of strange contract negotiations going on or nobody—least of all the act involved—had a clear vision of where the music should go. So you end up with an album like *Sincerely*—an interesting and eclectic batch of songs, immaculately produced, immaculately played by some

of the best pickers in the world, immaculately sung by four very talented sisters—with all the, well, sincerity of vanilla yogurt.

It's very good vanilla yogurt—I especially like their upbeat, mandolin-tinted version of The Beatles' "I've Just Seen a Face," which, to my ear, is as good or better than the original.

Still, all of this stuff slips out of your mind so easily. And I know that the pickers, the producers, the *sisters* can do so much better.

If you like vanilla yogurt, though, this is a good album.

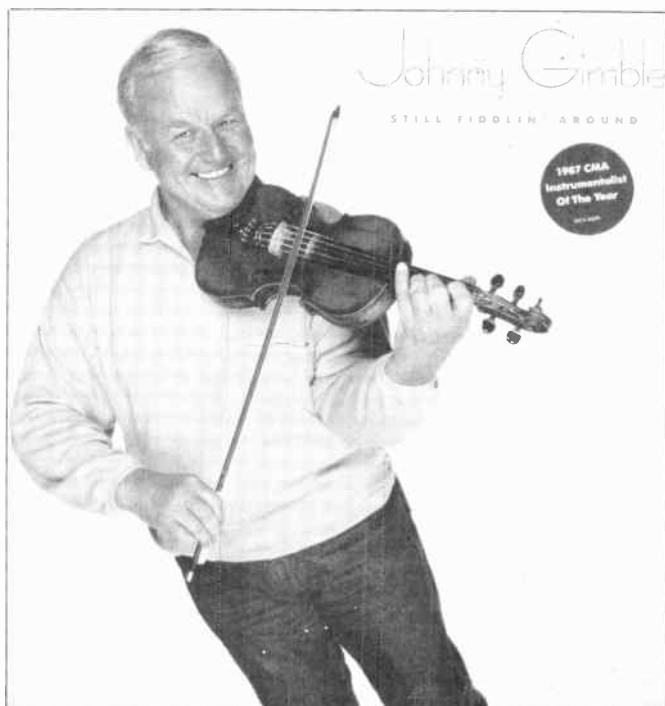
—MICHAEL BANE

Johnny Gimble

Still Fiddlin' Around

MCA 42021

Even given all the good Nashville studio fiddlers around, Johnny Gimble (who commutes from Texas) is still unbeatable for Western swing and honky tonk. Ask George Strait and his producer Jimmy Bowen, who use him on every hit. That's why John won the CMA's 1987



Record Reviews

Instrumentalist award again 12 years after he first won it. Unlike Chet Atkins (who's won so many times his name should be retired), Gimble's still a working sideman, which is what the award is (or should) be all about.

This is his first major-label solo album since his 1976 *Texas Dance Party* for Columbia/Lone Star. He'd previously done one in 1974 for Capitol under Merle Haggard's auspices. Everything he recorded in between was done for small labels like CMH and Tejas.

As a longtime fan, I'm convinced Gimble couldn't cut a bad album. So why am I a bit disappointed with *Still Fiddlin' Around*?

He first recorded his novelty number "Fiddlin' Around" with Chet 14 years ago, then several more times afterward. This time was once too often, especially when compared with the wittier "Have a Nice Day," his original satire on that abused phrase. Better yet are his imaginative interpretations of old instrumentals like "Darling Nellie Gray" (which inspired the melody of "Faded Love") and "Put On Your Old Grey Bonnet." Gimble breathes new life into songs that were worn out long ago, a measure of his arranging talents.

The jazz-drenched "Rural Riffin'" possesses the same wit and creativity the best Texas Playboy instrumentals had in the days Gimble worked with them. However, original instrumentals like "Quick Step Waltz," "Mandolopin'" and the melancholy "Blue Again" break no new ground. "Pretty Palomino" does, but the tasteless pseudo-funk introduction destroys it. Any minute you expect James Brown to jump in.

So where does the problem lie? A measure of the stability in Gimble's own recording career is the fact many of the same fine musicians from his earlier albums, his son/bassist Dick, pianist Curly Hol-



lingsworth and steel player Maurice Anderson, still work with him. They're great backing him onstage. But on record, they don't challenge him, and great instrumentalists like John need that challenge. As a result most of these performances are too laid-back and predictable.

I know Gimble can blow anyone out of the water. He does it when he plays behind Strait; he's done it on some of Willie's albums, with Haggard and in plenty of other places as well. At a very young 62, he's still at the peak of his powers, and *Still Fiddlin' Around* at least reaffirms that. But I'd like to hear him with musicians who can bring out that edge. John knows who I mean, and he has their phone numbers, too.

—RICH KIENZLE

Holly Dunn
Across the Rio Grande
MTM D1-71070

Holly Dunn's debut album, highlighted as it was by "Daddy's Hands," was power-

ful though flawed by some bland performances. The blandness may have come from producer Tommy West, whose terminal mellowness smothered Judy Rodman's MTM album last year.

With West relegated to "Executive Producer" status, *Across the Rio Grande* seems far more in line with Dunn's potential. She not only co-wrote six of the numbers, most with her brother, Chris Waters; the two of them together also co-produced the album. And for the most part, this time material, performance and musicianship all came together.

Dunn's own numbers are the strongest, among them "City Limit," a chronicle of country girl dealing with big city disillusionment which tells an old tale well. "Have a Heart" shows her equally fine vocal phrasing ("It's Always Gonna Be) Someday" conveys general frustration and impatience. "If Nobody Knew My Name" is beautifully sung with a raw, traditional feel straight out of The Louvin Brothers (though that probably wasn't Dunn's conscious intention). Her modern

hymn "On the Wings of An Angel," co-written with Don Schlitz, is also full of echoes of the past. And her performance — understandably, given her church background — is heartfelt and believable.

The three mistakes here could've been avoided. The first was including Don Cook and Chick Rains' self-conscious "Just Across the Rio Grande," a hand-wringing, whiny ballad about illegal aliens better suited for Joan Baez. Likewise, nothing can save Dunn's unimaginative ballad, "Lonesome Highway," or Waters' and Tom Shapiro's equally dull "Stronger the Tie." But for other slots on the album Dunn picked fine songs by other writers, particularly Billy Joel's "Traveler's Prayer." Its soaring, dynamic bluegrass arrangement combines a passionate vocal with some fine picking. The upbeat "That's What Your Love Does to Me," by Chick Rains and the long underrated singer-songwriter Bill Caswell, also fits her like the proverbial glove.

Dunn/Waters' restrained, low-keyed production and the O'Kanes-style acoustic backing compliment these songs nicely. Instrumental heavies like Jerry Douglas (dobro), Mark O'Connor (fiddle), Sam Bush (mandolin), Sonny Garish (steel) and Joey Miskulin (accordion) plus Vince Gill and The Whites (background vocals) create music that really enhances Dunn's voice.

Frankly, last year I was so skeptical of MTM's potential I couldn't believe it was a division of the TV production company that gave us so many great TV shows. Between Dunn and Becky Hobbs, that view's changing. Now I'm amazed and skeptical in another way. Who woulda thought *Lou Grant*, *Hill Street Blues*, Holly Dunn and Becky Hobbs all came out the same place? As Chuck Berry wrote, it goes to show you never can tell.

—RICH KIENZLE

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FOR CMSA MEMBERS ONLY

Roy Rogers Album Specials

Roy Rogers, one of the founding members of The Sons of the Pioneers and a peerless yodeler, better known to the world at large as The King of the Cowboys, is featured in the CMSA's Legends of Country Music feature in this issue's *Newsletter*. Read all about Roy and enjoy the photos, too.

To round out record collections, two special albums are available that present Roy in his earliest days as a solo singer and also as the singing cowboy of movie fame in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Columbia Historic Edition's *Roy Rogers* (FC 38907) includes the following songs: "Ridin' Ropin'," "That Pioneer Mother of Mine," "She's All Wet Now," "A Lonely Ranger Am I," "The Mail Must Go Through," "Headin' for Texas and Home," "Old Pioneer," "When I Camped Under the Stars," "Dust" and "My Little Lady (Hadie Brown)." "My Little Lady" is a Jimmie Rodgers song, one of the first Roy ever performed in public. "That Pioneer Mother of Mine," by Tim Spencer, another original Pioneer, was one of Roy's and his mother's favorite songs. The liner notes include detailed descriptions of each song, its origins and the circumstances surrounding its recording.

Roy Rogers and The Sons of the Pioneers, *The King of the Cowboys* (BFX 15124), a Bear Family re-issue, includes the following songs, some solo performances by Roy, some sung by Roy and The Pioneers, from the late 1940's and early 1950's: "Hawaiian Cowboy," "Hasta La Vista," "Pecos Bill," "I'm Gonna Gallop, Gallop to Gallup, New Mexico," "With a Sweep of My Sombrero," "Saddle Serenade," "Make-Believe Cowboy," "Horse-shoe Moon," "Church Music," "The Story of Bucky and Dan," "Cowboy Heaven," "Ride, Son, Ride," "Don't Ever Leave Me," "Buck-Eye Cowboy" and "A Four-Legged Friend."

Advertised in *Country Music Magazine* from time to time, including recently in the May/June issue, are two cassettes available through Nashville Warehouse also by Roy. Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, *Jesus Loves Me*, includes inspirational favorites such as "Read the Bible and Pray," "I'll Be a Sunbeam" and "Until We Meet Again." Roy Rogers, Dale Evans and The Sons of the Pioneers, *Love of the West*, includes such blockbusters as "Happy Trails" and "The Yellow Rose of Texas." For details on



price and how to order, see the May/June issue, p. 69.

The Columbia Historic Editions album and the Bear Family re-issue are available through us directly. Columbia Historic Edition, *Roy Rogers* sells for \$9.98, member's price \$7.98, available in album or cassette. Roy Rogers, *King of the Cowboys*, sells for \$12.98, member's price \$10.98, available in albums only. For details on how to order, see below.

Buried Treasures Specials

Rich Kienzle's Buried Treasures selections are always available to CMSA members at a special reduced rate, \$2.00 off each album offered and reduced rates on postage. Buried Treasures this issue includes Porter Wagoner, Hank Snow, Jimmy Martin, The Osborne Brothers, Homer & Jethro, Elton Britt, Jimmy C. Newman, Wynn Stewart, Chuck Guillory, Lester Flatt and Mac Wiseman and more. Many of these artists are CMSA favorites.

How to Order These Items

To order the two Roy Rogers albums discussed here or any Buried Treasures album at member's prices, send check or money order to *Country Music Magazine*, 342 Madison Avenue, Suite 2118, New York, New York 10173. Mark your envelope, Attention: Dept. 91088N. **Include your membership number.**

For each item ordered, add \$1.95 postage and handling, \$.95 for each additional. Members get a special break on postage.

Ideas Welcome

The CMSA is five years old as of this September. Any members with ideas for a special activity or contest, please send them to the *Newsletter* Editor. Happy birthday, CMSA.

MEMBERS POLL / SEPTEMBER 1988

VOTE

Your opinions can help influence record companies, radio stations, record stores, concert promoters, managers and performers. As a CMSA member, you have an organized way of making your opinion known, by filling out the Members Poll. We forward the results of the Polls to those involved in the business of country music who are interested in what fans are thinking and doing, and we publish the results.

Bought Any Good Records Lately?

1. Did you buy any albums (records or tapes) in the last month?
 Yes No
 How many records? _____ How many cassettes? _____

2. Which ones did you like best? List performer and album title.

- a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____
 d. _____
 e. _____

Your Choice for Album and Single of the Month

3. To vote, list the numbers of your top 5 favorites from the Top 25, page 68.

Singles (list 5 numbers) Albums (list 5 numbers)

Been to the Grand Ole Opry?

4. Did you ever attend the Grand Ole Opry when it was at the Ryman Auditorium? Yes (How many times? _____) No
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 6. If you attended the Opry at *both* the Ryman Auditorium and Opryland, how do you rate the performance?
 Opryland better Ryman Auditorium better About the same
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Only CMSA members are eligible to vote. If you are a member, fill in your Membership Number _____.

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Buried Treasures /

Reissues,
Rarities and the
Hard-to-Find

Wynn Stewart: I normally avoid mentioning albums I've worked on, but I'm about to make an exception. Instead of tackily describing why you ought to have it, I'll simply describe the artist and material. Wynn Stewart's first recordings, made in the mid-1950's, were for the Intro and Capitol labels. Later he signed with Challenge Records. The double album *Wishful Thinking* (BFD 15261) covers his complete 1958-1963 Challenge recordings.

His taut, intense voice, complimented throughout by Ralph Mooney's magnificent steel guitar, resulted in truly compelling honky tonk music including his 1959 hit "Wishful Thinking," "Playboy," "Above and Beyond" and several early duets with Jan Howard which were her first records. Two 1963 songs from his final session include the bass playing of an unknown Merle Haggard. Stewart had later hits on Capitol, including "It's Such a Pretty World Today," but never achieved the stardom many felt he could have before he died in 1985.

Porter Wagoner: Porter and Dolly reunited on the Opry stage at Roy Acuff's 85th Birthday celebration, reminding everyone of just how special they were as a team from the late 1960's to the mid-1970's. Since their names are so inexorably linked, Porter's individual excellence is often overlooked. He was among the few singers to carry on the hardcore traditions of 1940's singers into the 1960's and 1970's, but in recent years little of his early work as a solo artist has been available at all.

Stetson has begun to re-issue vintage albums from RCA as well as from Capitol and MCA. As part of that project, they've just re-released Porter's first album, *Satisfied Mind* (HAT 3064), from 1956. The title track was



a major hit. However, long-time Porter favorites like "Company's Comin'" and "Tricks of the Trade" are also here, along with versions of other hits, including "I Guess I'm Crazy," "Midnight" and "Born to Lose" as well as the bluesy "My Bonfire," an unusual sound for Porter at that time.

Grand Ole Opry: One of Decca Records' least admirable habits in the 1960's was releasing studio recordings of Decca country artists with dubbed-in applause. Two Ernest Tubb "concerts" and a *Midnight Jamboree* album were done this way, and though not marketed as live, in-concert albums, they left enough hints for the buyer to misinterpret their true nature.

Saturday Night at the Grand Ole Opry (HAT 3059), rereleased by Stetson, is just such a "recreated" 1962 Opry show featuring Ernest Tubb, Tommy Jackson, Roy Drusky, Bill Monroe, Kitty Wells, Roy Acuff, Tompall and the Glaser Brothers, Johnny & Jack, etc. Note how carefully "M.C." T. Tommy Cutrer avoids stating this was an actual Opry show in his introduction. Unless you need all you can get by these artists, the album's hardly essential.

Jimmy Martin: In 1964, when bluegrass hardly ever made the country charts, Jimmy Martin's maudlin trucker tragedy "Widow Maker" was a Top 20 hit. Pre-



dictably, an album of the same name followed: *Widow Maker* (HAT 3062) now rereleased by Stetson. While most Decca albums from that era featured the artist's hit song and a load of filler, this one contains some truly outstanding traditional bluegrass, ably sung by Martin.

Consistent with the trucker theme, he provides fine upbeat interpretations of "Six Days on the Road" and the Charlie Moore-Bill Napier bluegrass standard, "Truck Driver's Queen," as well as "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes". And lest you think all traditional bluegrass was pious and wholesome, catch "The Old Man's Drunk Again."

The Osborne Brothers: Back in 1957 Sonny and Bobby Osborne earned the wrath of Bill Monroe and others for daring to use drums on one of their records. The furor had swelled considerably by 1967 when *Modern Sounds of Bluegrass Music* (Stetson HAT 3063) was recorded. On it, The Osbornes are augmented by some of Nashville's best 1960's studio musicians. The instrumentation includes their first use of electric bass, on "The Kind of Woman I Got," a song which hit Number 33 on the *Billboard* charts that year.

Most numbers are standard bluegrass, except for Ernest Tubb standards "Walking the Floor Over You"

and "Let's Say Goodbye Like We Said Hello." Shortly after this album's release, Sonny electrically amplified his 5-string banjo and Bobby his mandolin, and things *really* hit the fan. Over 20 years later, amplifiers notwithstanding, The Osbornes sound so traditional it's hard to understand how anyone could have been upset by either amplifiers or the album.

Homer & Jethro: Guitarist Homer Haynes and mandolinist Jethro Burns were *it* as far as country comedy was concerned in the 1950's and 1960's. Though both were outstanding musicians (they backed Chet Atkins on many of his early RCA disks), they made a name for themselves singing parodies of both pop and country songs. As is the case with most comedy acts, their approach didn't result in a slew of hit records (they did have four), yet they maintained a strong following and recorded 27 RCA albums until their partnership ended with Homer's death in 1971. Jethro performs today as an instrumentalist.

Barefoot Ballads (HAT 3068), their second album, appeared in 1957. It features parodies on old country numbers, among them the 1940's Red Ingle hit "Cigarettes, Whisky and Wild, Wild Women," "Boll Weevil," "High-Geared Daddy" and "Keep Them Cold Icy Fingers Off of Me." The vocals are laced with Jethro's hot mandolin and juicy guitar from Atkins (Jethro's brother-in-law). Because they took the musical side of their craziness seriously, their records hold up well.

Hank Snow: So few Hank Snow albums are available these days that the appearance of any one of them is cause for celebration. But be warned: *Old Doc Brown and Other Narrations* (HAT

3066) is made up totally of spoken recitations and stories. The Singing Ranger's rarest album, original copies of this one have sold in good shape for \$150.

Whether an entire album of "inspirational" recitations ("Old Doc Brown" and "What Is a Father?") or talking blues ("How to Play the Guitar") succeeds is up to you to decide. I think it's a bit much for anyone to take at one sitting, but some people enjoy them enough to take it all in. In any case, the album certainly shows a different side of Hank and preserves a style extremely popular 40 years ago. Its saving graces are the musicianship of all concerned and Hank's delightful performance of the Johnny Mercer-Hoagy Carmichael pop standard, "Lazybones."

Elton Britt: To me, yodeling becomes so predictable so fast that it's best enjoyed in extremely limited doses. That's why yodelers like Kenny Roberts have never been favorites of mine. Yet I've never really disliked Elton Britt's music. He enjoyed a long, distinguished career that included plenty of non-yodel hits like the World War II anthem "There's a Star-Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere." After having one final hit in 1968, he died all but forgotten in rural central Pennsylvania in 1972.

The material on *Yodel Songs* (HAT 3067), his first RCA Victor album (1956) was recorded over a long period from the late 1930's to 1954. He sang the earliest track, "Patent Leather Boots," in the Jimmie Rodgers tradition. His 1948 hit "Chime Bells" is here, along with other predictable material including two 1949 duets with Rosalie Allen. What makes the album special are the screwy surprises: a yodeling version of "St. James Infirmary" that nearly works and a delightful early 1950's "St. Louis Blues Yodel" you have to hear to believe.

Jimmy C. Newman: Every Cajun artist who has made it into the mainstream has

mixed his own music with more conventional country offerings both onstage and on records. This is the line followed by Rusty & Doug Kershaw and by Jimmy C. Newman, who remains a consistent and entertaining artist able to perform different styles without missing an "aii-ee." When Newman joined Decca after having hits with Dot, he already knew how to mix things up to reach a wider audience. Yet Owen Bradley's production left enough pure Cajun to make Newman's records stand out.

His 1961 Decca debut album, *Jimmy C. Newman* (Stetson HAT 3060), features his hit "Alligator Man" along with his followup, Marijohn Wilkin's "Everybody's Dying for Love." As with all Decca albums of the era, there were cover versions galore, not only of Cajun classics ("Big Mamou" and "Good Deal, Lucille") but standards like "I'll Hold You in My Heart," "You're the Only Star (In My Blue Heaven)" and "Sail Along, Silv'ry Moon."

Chuck Guillory: Jimmy C. Newman paid his early dues working with fiddler Chuck Guillory's Rhythm Boys. A legend in the bayou country (even George Jones sang with him for six months), Guillory's been overlooked in recent years. Chris Strachwitz of Arhoolie Records

recorded two Guillory sessions with another Cajun legend, singer/guitarist Preston Manuel. The 1982 session was acoustic, the 1987 electric. The result is *Chuck Guillory & The Rhythm Boys* (Arhoolie 5039).

Side one features Guillory and Manuel backed by members of the young Cajun band Beausoleil. No doubt about it: Guillory's fiddling and Manuel's lusty vocals are the Real Thing. Side two revives the 1940's electric Cajun sound that spawned greats like Harry Choates and Al Terry. Among the backup musicians is legendary Cajun steel guitarist "Papa Cairo" Lampirez who worked with Choates. Cairo's singing and hot non-pedal steel playing on "Grand Texas" (whose melody clearly inspired "Jambalaya") are magical. If you ever wondered what raw, authentic Cajun music sounds like in its home territory, here's your answer.

Lester Flatt & Mac Wiseman: After Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs split in 1969, Earl moved to a more progressive sound while Lester Flatt stuck to a hardcore traditional bluegrass format. When he started recording on his own for RCA, he recorded alone and also with another former Bill Monroe singer-guitarist who'd moved to bigger things: Mac Wiseman.

Lester 'n' Mac (HAT 3065), co-produced by Jack Clement and Bob Ferguson, first appeared on RCA in 1971, one of three albums they did as a team. This one featured several veteran bluegrass pickers including ex-Flatt & Scruggs sidemen dobroist Josh Graves, fiddler Paul Warren and bassist Jake Tulloch along with banjoist Vic Jordan and mandolinist Roland White. Flatt's and Wiseman's voices blended beautifully on standards like "Jimmie Brown, the Newsboy," the Monroe classic "Will You Be Lovin' Another Man" and Flatt and Scruggs' "Your Love Is Like a Flower." Hopefully Stetson will get to the other two Flatt-Wiseman efforts someday soon.

30 Years of MCA Hits: Most major labels don't do anthology reissues like they once did, in part because they're not as popular with fans as they once were. One recent exception that turned out quite well is MCA's *30 Years of Hits* (MCA2-8025). These 31 tracks ranging from 1958 to the present include some predictable choices, one hit per year, and a few old favorites that it's good to find available again.

A pleasant surprise is the selection of Bill Monroe's 1958 instrumental "Scotland." More predictable are Brenda Lee's "I'm Sorry" and Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces." The treasures include out-of-print tunes like Warner Mack's 1965 hit "The Bridge Washed Out," Bill Anderson's 1968 "Wild Weekend," Jeanne Pruett's 1973 "Satin Sheets" and Cal Smith's 1974 smash, "Country Bumpkin." Predictable later cuts are the Oaks' "Elvira," George Strait's "Ocean Front Property," Reba's "Somebody Should Leave" and Waylon's current "If Ole Hank Could Only See Us Now." The packaging is fine, though I could do without Don Roy and Kay Shaw West's rehashing the year's current events on the notes for each track. As Homer & Jethro once sang, *Oooh, that's corny!*

RICH KIENZLE

How to Get These Treasures

Available in records only, at prices shown: Chuck Guillory, *Chuck Guillory & The Rhythm Boys* (Arhoolie 5039), \$10.98/Wynn Stewart, *Wishful Thinking* (BFD 15261), two-record set, \$21.98. Available in records or cassettes, at prices shown: Porter Wagoner, *Satisfied Mind* (HAT 3064), \$10.98/Various artists, *Saturday Night at the Grand Ole Opry* (HAT 3059), \$10.98/Jimmy Martin, *Widow Maker* (HAT 3062), \$10.98/Osborne Bros., *Modern Sounds of Bluegrass Music* (HAT 3063), \$10.98/Homer & Jethro, *Barefoot Ballads* (HAT 3068), \$10.98/Hank Snow, *Old Doc Brown and Other Narrations* (HAT 3066), \$10.98/Elton Britt, *Yodel Songs* (HAT 3067), \$10.98/Jimmy C. Newman, *Jimmy C. Newman* (HAT 3060), \$10.98/Lester Flatt and Mac Wiseman, *Lester 'n' Mac* (HAT 3065), \$10.98/Various artists, *30 Years of Hits* (MCA2-8025), \$12.98.

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Twenty Questions' crack investigative team finally catches up with Shotgun Red, star of Nashville Now on The Nashville Network, Tonto to Ralph Emery's Lone Ranger and arguably the most famous puppet in the world, on the balcony of a condo overlooking a flawless piece of beach somewhere in the Caribbean. Shotgun, the crusty old cowboy, is wearing a Hawaiian shirt and ogling girls in very skimpy bathing suits. Every so often, he sighs a sigh that could only come from a puppet. Behind Shotgun Red, his good-time buddy and full-time manager Steve Hall connives to pull some strings in the timeless manner of managers everywhere. The sun is hot, the rum is cold and Shotgun Red is ready to answer 20 Questions.

20 Questions with SHOTGUN RED



by Michael Bane

1

How long have you been around, anyway?

First of all, I'm one year younger than Ralph Emery.

2

That's a bad sign...

I know, I know. It is.

3

So how does a puppet, granted a very funky one, make it to Music Row?

Well, I was working in a little store in Brainerd, Minnesota, and Brainerd is spelled B-r-a-i-n-e-r-d. A lot of people spell it a-r-d, but Brainerd, Minnesota. And my soon-to-be manager, Steve Hall, and his band came through. Steve paid my \$40 bar tab and said I could go on the road with him and be his emcee and help front the show. That was about 1982, and that was the band I was with, you know, when we won the 1982 Seagram's Seven International Battle of the Bands for the state of Minnesota and the 1983 competition for Dodge/Wrangler. While we were competing in the national finals at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville in 1982, a promotion lady who was working for

that organization took me down to Ralph Emery's morning show, and we crashed the show.

4

Ralph was thrilled?

Well, we were uninvited. We just got out in the audience and started looking around and carrying on, that sort of thing, and Ralph pointed me out to the cameraman and said get a shot of me in the audience. Then he talked to me about why I was in town and about the International

Battle of the Bands competition, that I was down with the Minnesota state winning band for the finals. He said folks were starting a new thing in about three or four weeks called *The Nashville Network*. At that time, I didn't know what it was. And he said that he'd like to do some comedy routines and bits and try to maybe do a little something with me and do a little comedy stuff. We went down and did some comedy stuff with Ralph, we become so popular that they

signed me on full time as a kind of, I would say, semi-co-host. I get to work with Ralph as his little co-host, part time, semi-regular co-host, and ten months later they offered me my own show, *Country Clips*, which I get to host for Country Music Videos.

5

Ah, fame! The road was straight up from there, eh? I did a few kind of test appearances on *Hee Haw*, and the mail response was so great there that now I got a five year contract with the *Hee Haw* show, plus my own show, plus *Country Clips*. I get to co-host with Ralph Emery on *Nashville Now*, plus my own Christmas special annually, and, icing on the cake, nominations twice for ACE Awards in Los Angeles and three times for the *Music City News* Country Comedy award.

6

This is a toughie, Red. Who really runs *Nashville Now*, Ralph or you?

Oh, who really...? Good question, good question. Who really runs *Nashville Now*? You mean the show, *Nashville Now*? Oh, Ralph Emery is definitely, he runs it, he is the ramrod of ramrodders, he's the one who runs the show.

7

That may be true, but we hear you're always up-staging him, always on the verge of taking it over, you know, and throwing Ralph out there on the street...

Oh, no, no. I try to have fun with the *idea*. If Ralph said, okay, fine, it's yours, well, then I wouldn't know what to do if the show was dumped in my lap. Let me put it this way, without Shotgun Red, there will always be a Ralph Emery, but without Ralph Emery, there won't be a Shotgun Red.

8

That's fair enough, but speaking of rumors, we've

heard the strangest rumor that Shotgun Red is going to be walking around Opryland this year. And we're not talking human imposters in funny clothes, either.

Let's just say that Shotgun Red will be appearing in the park as kind of a test, to see if he might represent a new character for Opryland. I mean, maybe the new Mickey Mouse or Ronald McDonald. If it works, good for him—then they can renew for up to 10 years. Yeah, steal the show. Big bucks.

9

We've got to ask you about fame, this is important—a lot of artists get really famous and have trouble handling it. How do you handle all this fame?

Easy. Work Vern's Bar and Grill for 15 years for a hundred bucks a week, it's a piece of cake.

10

What about all the women who throw themselves at you?

Yeah, I love them girls until Miss Daisy finds out about it. Then she mashes me. Love the women, love the women.

11

But there's a serious side, too, isn't there?

Yeah, there is. If you want to handle fame, all you have to do is see some little kid that is one of these nominees for these Dream Wish organizations, where they're terminally ill, and they have one wish, and all they want to do is come to Nashville and meet Shotgun Red. And if that's all they want in life is just an opportunity to meet some little guy that they see on TV—and I'm going to look real straight ahead when I talk about this, because if I don't, I'll get real emotional with it—that will humble you.

12

Why do the kids like Red so much?

Well, that's kind of a unique thing. I mean, maybe because I make little sounds



Michael had to pull some strings to get this interview.

that nobody else makes, you know, funny little things. (*Makes a strange noise.*) Kids tell me they like the way I laugh. They like to duplicate that. And I like to think they like me because I'm honest, I don't pull any punches. Everybody likes a fun-loving little guy that teases, but nobody likes a...Don't print that.

13

Why do you pick on Ralph so much?

Where'd you get that tie, yick! Sure, I tease Ralph a little. But to really run Ralph down and say, you know, truer words were never spoken through falser teeth or talk about his hair, maybe he's got a toupee or something, I won't do that, because it's grinding, you know what I'm saying? It's not right. Ralph and Red have their little fun, but we love each other. And I want that to remain true.

14

And what about the Shotgun Red Fan Club?

I don't think you can narrow it down to little kids. I think it's children of all ages because I get so much mail. We got 60,000 members in our Shotgun Red Fan Club just this past month. We get so much mail that says, "Shotgun Red, you know, I wish you were my boyfriend" or "I really like you" or something to that effect, and "would you send me a picture, p.s., also send one for my daughter and my granddaughter?" Or "I hope this is not stupid, Red, I drive a truck for a living, I wish you'd send me a Shotgun Red doll so I could put it in

the cab of my truck." And race car drivers write me letters and send me pictures of cars that have Shotgun Red painted on the side, and say, "When we put Red on the side we win and when we take him off, we lose, so we're gonna leave him on as our mascot"—this was up in Pennsylvania, they run super modified over a flat track, you know, with Shotgun Red painted on both doors with a shotgun flaming. And they win all their features.

15

What's the strangest letter you've ever gotten?

I'll rip your head off...No, the strangest letter we ever got...you get a lot of them that say, you know, I wish you were my...I want to marry you...or I'm in love with you...those sorts of things. The strangest letter I've ever gotten...we've had a letter, a kind of a non-stop running letter, that we've been receiving for about five years now, that is just random writing, rain, day, cat, dog, over the hill, fence, and it's all written all over several pieces of paper folded inside of several pieces of paper, the inside of the envelope is written on, all over, and it's addressed to us, and it has a return address, and I can't think of the guy's name, but the entire sheet of paper is just solid writing of no coherent anything.

16

How about your family?

Oh, there's Miss Daisy, of course, my wife, and the two kids, Slingshot and Buckshot. I might notice a pretty girl on the beach on occasion...

(*Looks to the beach, sighs.*) But Ralph's always reminding me, "Hey, wait'll Miss Daisy hears about this!" Yeah, she'll mash me.

17

How does Red work up his bits?

A lot of it is given to me by people on the street that I meet in different places who say, "Hey, I have a joke for you" or "Here's something you might think is funny, maybe shocking, can you use this?" I get a lot of those. Up to this point, the last five years, there's been a lot of stolen material, and a majority of it has been stuff that I've heard on the road for the last 15 years, you know, other musicians, other entertainers, you know, everything, I could make a thousand references to what has already been done on the show, that has been stuff that I've heard in clubs, you know, the old, "Take me drunk, I'm home," "Don't go back, I'll be right away," "Don't touch that dial, you don't know where it's been," it's all stuff I've heard, you know, for a long time, different jokes. Everything after the opening is ad-libbed. Ninety minutes of ad-lib. I love that the best.

18

Did you ever see the movie, Magic, where a puppeteer got caught up with his puppet?

Yes.

19

Does it worry you?

No. Just between me and you, there's no such person as Steve Hall.

20

Let's get back to your future, shall we say, ambulation, Red. Is there any truth to the rumor that you're going to get a bottom?

Oh, I've already got a bottom! My pal Steve Hall ran into a couple of people who do robotics, so don't be surprised if you see me riding a tricycle. It'll blow Ralph away!

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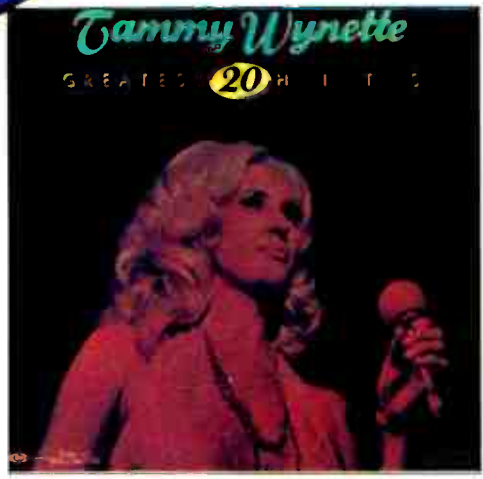
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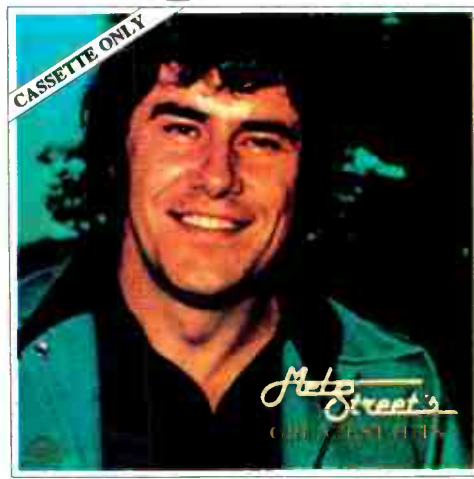
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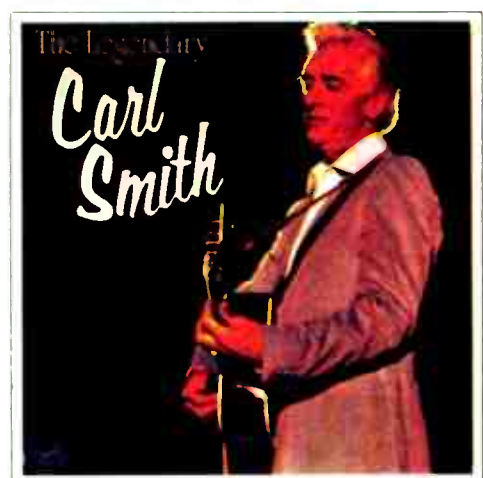
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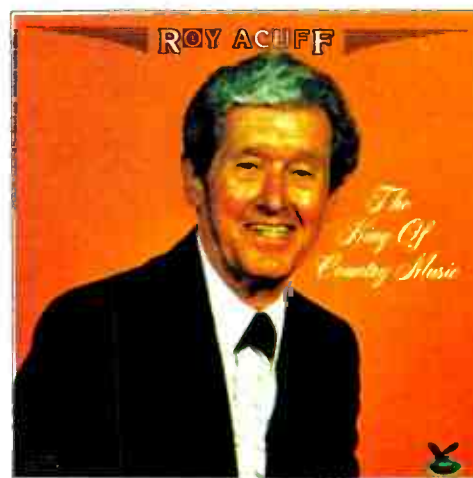
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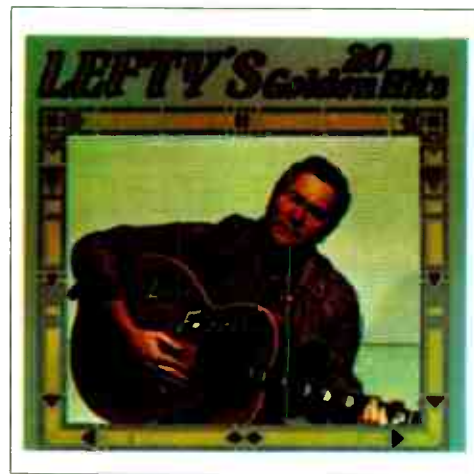
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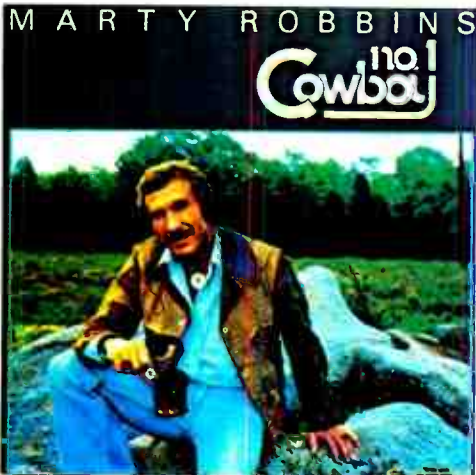
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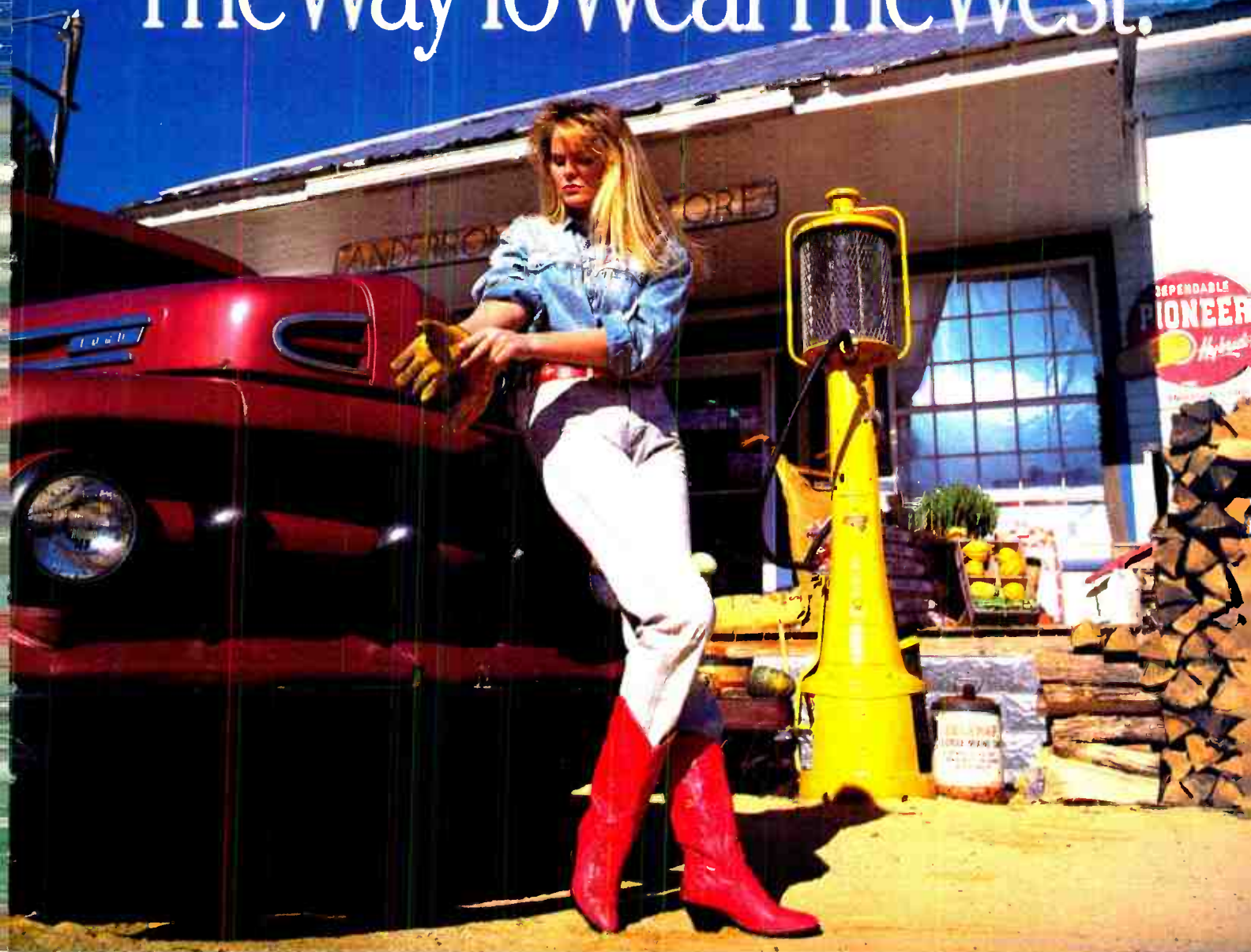
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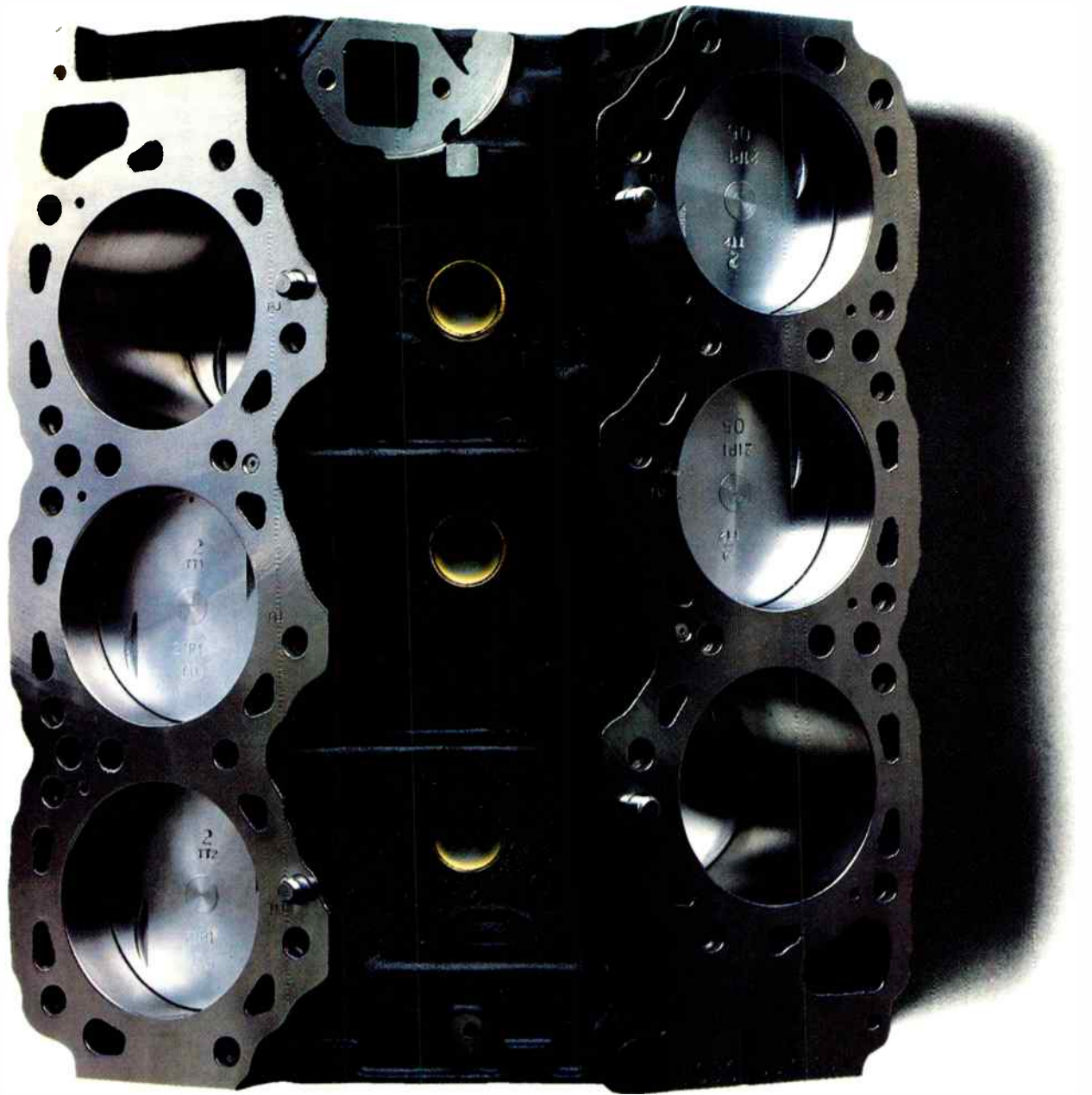
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